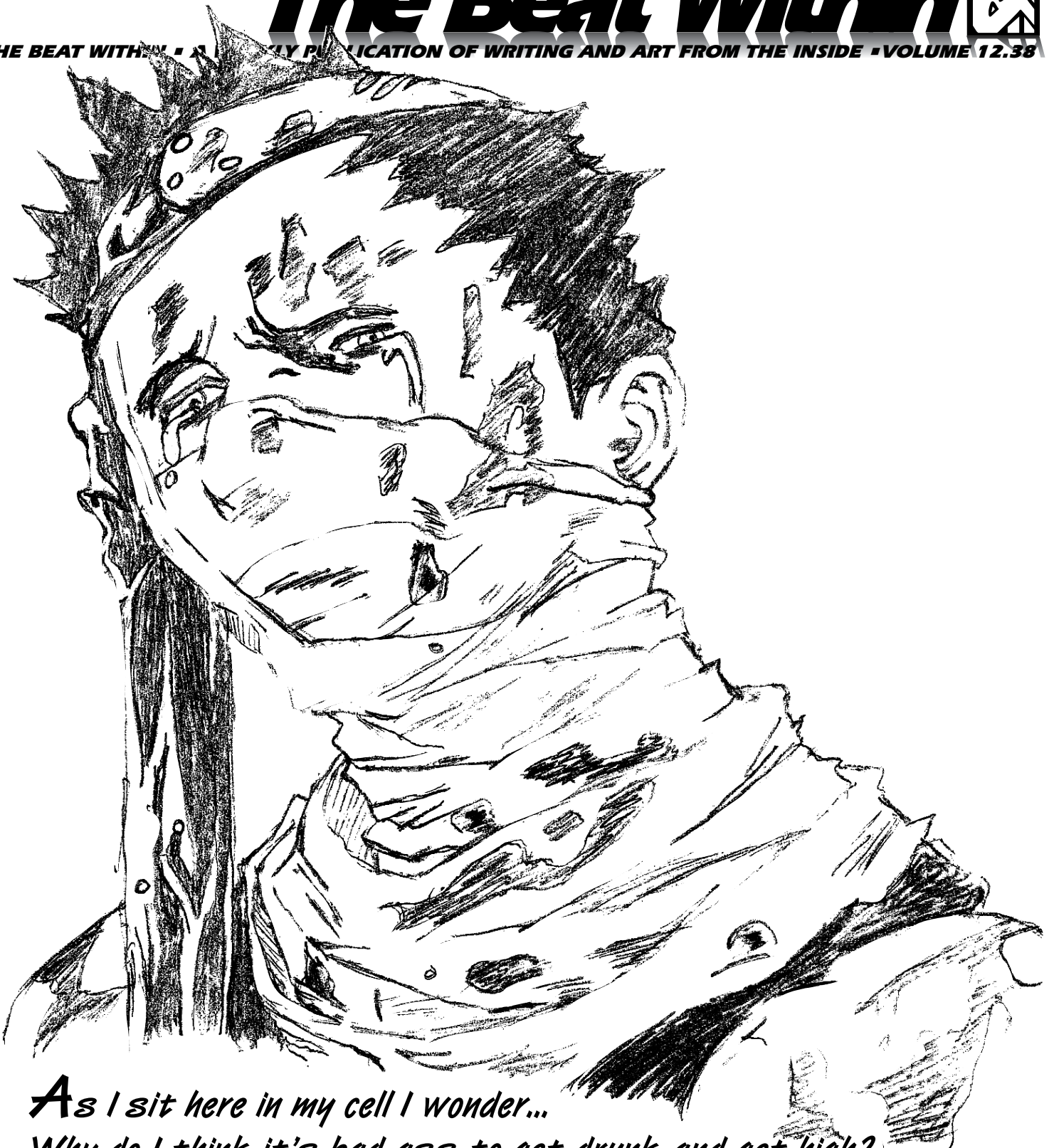




As I sit here in my cell I wonder...

Why do I think it's bad ass to get drunk and get high?

Why do I think its badass to gang bang?

Why do I think its badass trying to be a badass?

I don't run nothing, in here, the streets, a gang, nothing.

I walk around thinking life and every thing is cherry, but it's not.

read the rest of Tweety's POW on page 11

Hey Beat editorial note readers! It's great to have you back in this latest issue of writing and art from the inside. We are thrilled that you decided to stop by the ol' editor's note and give us a chance to share a little something with you loyal readers.

By the way, we thank you for including us as a part of your readership. There is so much to read in the world, and we couldn't be happier that you even give us a chance, so thanks!

Where to start... Today over a cup of Capricorn Coffee this editor and colleague, Will Roy were talking about parenting and the need for so many of you readers/writers to put your words into action when it comes to raising the children in your life. So many of you see the pitfalls and the dangers of following your elders into the system, and not being the father or mother figure you longed to have. We think Will did a wonderful job addressing just that when we were sipping our coffee, so we'll hand over the heart of this note to Will to share his thoughts in print...

There's no coincidence why many cultures, nations, and communities have a universal goal — a goal that's more beneficial than any other, a mission involving the progression of a people. And that goal is to give the generation after us a better chance than we had. To be able to grow old with the comfort of knowing we're leaving the world in good hands, that as long as we keep this as a priority, we leave no room for stagnation. But instead, we roll out a red carpet so our children won't have to tip-toe around the debris that held us down in our own lives. And if there is a negative cycle like a cycle of violence or a cycle of incarceration, it is on us who have the power of the present to break these cycles. Our children are looking at us for the answers and if you don't have children, the children you do know — nieces, nephews, brothers and sisters to name a few — are still soaking you up as a potential influence in their life. And there are a whole lot of us who've grown in age, but haven't yet grown in mind and maturity, leaving our children to not learn from our successes but instead to learn from our mistakes.

This is very apparent in many situations. For instance, the absent father teaching his kids to be present when they have kids because they know how it feels to have an absent father. Or, a mother who gets locked up, teaching her daughter that nothing is worth being taken away from her family because she knows how it feels to have a mother that wasn't there. Most of the time we leave the younger generation with more than we had through our accomplishments, but there are those instances when we leave them with lessons through our failures.

As a matter of fact, if you flip to the back of this great publication, this idea couldn't be more obvious. The Beat Without section is full of fathers, older brothers, aunts and any other elder that we idolize and what are they mostly writing about. They're writing about the mistakes they made in life, so that we don't have to follow the same road they had to follow. And if our children take heed to our mistakes, then that means that we didn't make those mistakes in vain. Sure, it's very fortunate when we can model our lives as positive influences for those who are to come after us, but some times and for certain people that's not effective enough. We, as thinkers, need to be challenged and how can we fully be challenged if we only know one side of things. How can a picture be painted clearer than to see the

ones we love and respect suffering consequences because of a simple choice they made, or for a simple choice they didn't make. Further reminding us of how we want to be viewed by the world, how we want to be viewed by our own selves.

Speaking from the experience of not having my father around when I was growing up, he taught me a valuable lesson without exemplifying that lesson. His absence, at times when I really needed him, prompted me to make a vow to never leave my child when I decided to have one, so I can be there for the times he needed me whenever that was. Now, I do have a son and I'm not saying I'll always be there for him because I can't predict the future, but I am saying I'll do whatever's in my power to be present. And in the unfortunate event that I don't, I'd have dropped the ball and would leave it to him to break the cycle of absent fathers whenever he decided to have children. Thus, my family tree, my roots, my heritage of those who came before me would be stagnant for a generation losing many years of opportunity for me to add to my family's progression.

The Beat Within is a magnificent tool to not only breaking down barriers, but also to break down cycles. "Look young brother, I too was sellin' dope to feed my family, but now I'm serving five years in prison and my family is waiting for me to come home. Is that what you want for yourself?" In order to progress as a people, we must ensure that each generation was better off than the one before. Otherwise, we're inevitably doomed to repeat the same mistakes our parents made, thus perpetuating the cycles that hold us down.

You couldn't ask for a better commentary than that, thanks Will!

This week, the topics discussed in our issue prior to the writing in the workshops were, "Thinkin' Outside The 'Box..." - There are many times when we're able to think outside of jail, the dayroom, and our cells. These are the times we want to hear about today. What makes you think outside the box that you're in? What makes your mind travel to the outs, and where does it travel? Is it a phone call to your family? Or a letter from your girlfriend or boyfriend? Is it a book that you can't put down, or just a random memory that comes floating across your mind? What takes your mind off of being where you are? Please, think outside the box.

Our second topic, "That Advice" - We all have been given plenty of advice in our young lives, from reliable resources to the not so reliable. This week we want you writers to share with The Beat readers a time you took poor advice. Tell us about the worst advice you ever took and how it affected you. Why did you take such a risk? Did it sound like a bad decision then? Was it worth it? How did this poor advice also affect your friends and family? What did you learn by this bad choice? When did you realize you made a bad choice, or did you know all along? Tell The Beat about the worst advice you ever took.

Lastly, the very popular topic, "Dream Vacation."

OK, readers, lets get on with the show - this hopefully inspirational read! Thanks again for taking us into your world. Thanks in advance for sharing this issue with your peers and allies. We definitely look forward to reading your letters and featuring your contributions in future issues of The Beat Within. It is a payday for us to know we can give you this venue to educate and touch lives, and we are equally thrilled how many of you step up to make a difference each week.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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The Beat Without 54



Janet Jackson

One day I went to the beach. I was kicking back eating donuts and I saw a moose in an action movie. I saw Michael Jackson walking by, after he walked by I saw Janet Jackson walking by and I was like, "whoa, she is gorgeous!" I ran after her and then I said "lets kick it with seven digits." The end.

-Bobby

Karma

Iv learned that Karma is just a five letter word
it'll come and get you
when it does there's nothing you can do
so do unto others as you want them to do unto you
cause in the end everything comes back 2 haunt u....

-Manuel

My Messing Life

I cheat lie steal but don't kill
I love extacy in the form of a pill
yes I see blue yellow and purple hill
I'm so cold that ice doesn't chill
I understand that all of it is bad
don't blame me just blame my dad
I feel he cheated on me
I take it al in like a G
hop skip and jump like a flea
I'm black but kick it like Bruce Lee
I feel like salt water in the sea
now you mess with him instead of me
I really don't care 'cause I got this key
about to flip it and make my cash
messing with females tha shake they ass
never mess with girls from the past
females lie and cheat too.
Don't mistake her for my boo.

-Ira

I'm A Gee

Look in through my eyes and you'll see what a gee is like.
For me everyday is a struggle to stay alive.
That's just how it is in this life of mine,
you can see me posted in the streets in my hood,
putting in work for mine,
you know a gee got to take care of his own,
a homie to me is my carnal
many generation of a gee
that's just how it is in my part of the family
I can't say I don't like it
look a bit more and you'll see the love I got for my own
I don't think I chose to bang
gangbanging chose me
it is just my culture, that's just how life is for me
I love to wake up and live a gee's life
24/7 thing for me
not no part time job for a gee
I love my city
the city of Los Angeles
can't have enough of this life of mine
making money like it ain't nothing
drinking with the homies and my family

-Ricardo

From The Beat: It's been a long time coming, but we finally have our first installment of writings from the young men and women from Central Juvenile Hall in downtown Los Angeles. A huge thanks to the good people of Central Juvenile Hall, particularly Michael Arrington, who so believes in this work, with the hope that one day The Beat Within will have a Southern California edition alongside all the other fine writing publications and programs in the community. Hey, why not? Until then, thank you Michael for opening the door for The Beat, this is a dream come true, and thank you Efty Sharony for facilitating workshops. It's been awhile since we worked with Efty. Hopefully this will be our connection to continue doing the good work! Presently, given Efty's work outside of The Beat, we are working on finding another day that will work for Beat workshops. We hope this won't be too much of a delay in the action. Until then, ehnyoy this initial installment, we hope responses from Efty will follow in future issues, until then take in the writings from the young people incarcerated in Central Juvenile Hall. We do want to say, if you young writers plan to write pieces that talk about your hood, write a piece in a way that all can embrace, 'cause none of us readers want to read about how big and bad you or your hood is. Educate the readers.

Camcorder With In

If I had a camcorder
in my brain I will love
to change my life.
And correct my mistake.
And go back to my community and give what I took away
I did so much wrong and not so much good when my dad died
I feel like shhh.
My mom said keep your head up
And I pray to the Lord
He said I can make it through this life I choose to live.
But my family is going through so much pain
I am making a commitment, to breaking the chain
That's why I'm sorry for what I did.
That's why I want to make a change.

-Earl

Why Is Love So Much Pain

When I look at love, I look at it like it's going to be the best thing in the world. But six weeks later it's pain, why, because my boyfriend left me for another girl.

I thought people was right about love lasting forever, but they is wrong, because love don't last forever but when you picture it, it do because you have to work with it.

You won't always love, love will find you sometimes, you can find love but I never really understand why love is pain and pain is love, but sometimes I think why love is so much?

I always wanted to know, but hey what happens to love it always ends for me. You can't never say any one relationship end because people die for love. I really think why is love so much pain because people get killed for love they do anything for love that's what I think.

Why is love so much pain.

-Jasper

Good God

I think God would say be good. And stay in class and don't do drugs. Keep your mind on girls, be good, don't hurt no one, even though you did something bad doesn't mean you are a bad person.

Even though you are in juvenile hall when you get out you can change your life, and you can grow up and be somebody and when you grow up you will be stronger. The end.

-Thinking Ahead

Life

Stressing and suppressing
 Is nothing but depressing
 Strength and education
 Is just an expectation
 The expectation to survive
 This cold, hard life
 Strength to survive
 To still be alive
 Expectations of life
 is what make us who we are
 It's not going be an easy journey
 But neither is it hard
 Set your mind to it
 An accomplish everything you want
 Go on with your life,
 Only your pass will haunt you down with nothing but
 suspension
 That hangs in the air like one of a nation
 Don't be careless
 Guilt it not weightless
 And the only guilt you got
 Is of not doing the things you should've
 Done.

-Dimples

Fear

As time seems to fly! And tears
 Begins to escape my eye
 I shall feel no shame because
 In reality I am the
 One to blame!
 As I sit here and show
 These people no fear
 And only show my angry tears
 Showing false feelings
 But know one know one
 Truly cares
 As I sit here and care about
 Nothing
 My true feeling comes out
 With a little bit of tears
 But hope nobody sees
 My tears that I've
 Been trying to hide for the
 Last couple of years
 But still I show no fear!

-Maskman

As I'm Looking Out

As I'm looking out my window all I see is red county
 brick wall
 As I'm looking out my window, all I see is kids with the
 same clothes on
 As I'm looking out my window you'll see I'm locked up,
 for sure
 As I'm looking out my window you know I'm locked up
 in Central
 Let me be free
 Let me out from these chains you see.

-Earl

*I've learned to deal with what-
 ever they throw at me 'cause
 in the end it'll make a better
 man out of me.*

My Life

Can't seem to get out of these street
 Can't seem to shake this money
 Wandering why trouble keep following me!
 Tryin' to get ahead of the game
 But I can't seem to get it on track
 It's like takin' a few feet forward and too many feet back
 I see my life won't change and I'm stuck in the game
 As soon as I get out it keeps pulling me back, man
 Trying so hard to keep my life on track
 Robbing sucks and showin' no shame
 Locked up in between these off-white walls
 Makin' three minute phone calls
 And only I'm the one to blame!

-Monic

In This Place

In this place stressing, wondering when I'm going to get
 out. I think it's because I am depressed, but I can't figure
 it out. Too many lonely nights in this despicable place.
 I'm no longer able to put a smile on my face, wanting to
 go home to my family to the people that cares and loves
 me.

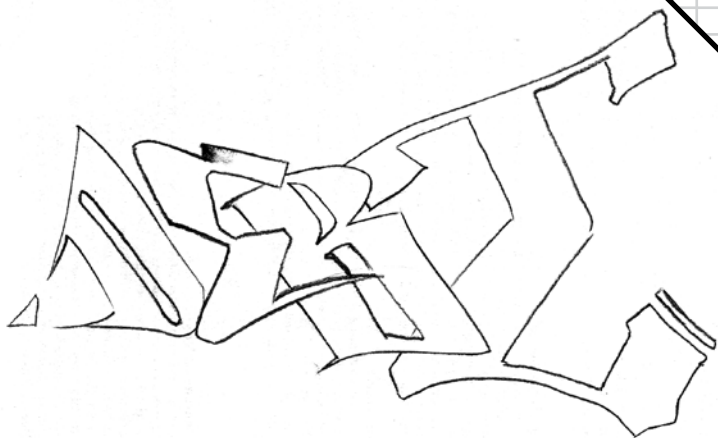
Each day I'm wondering when I'm going home, while
 I'm sitting in my room all alone thinking about how I got
 myself in this predicament. Thinking back to the day I did
 this shhh. I knew I should have listen to that voice in my
 head. If I would've I wouldn't be here laying on this county
 bed. I would've never thought that I would be eating this
 county food.

I guess being in here has me in this messed up mood.
 Get the heck out my face man I ain't trying to be rude but
 I don't feel like talking to you.

So you can take it how you want to take it, that's up to
 to you, but I don't give a heck and that's how I feel forget
 hiding my feelings. I'm just keeping it real.

I've learned to deal with whatever they throw at me
 'cause in the end it'll make a better man out of me.

-Manuel



Incarceration

In jail were destined to fail
 then don't allow me to get out and prevail
 in here they don't care about us
 all they care about is making a quick buck
 staff like to show boat
 all they do is gloat
 all day every day without a delay
 I can't stand being here because I want to be out there
 I feel as if my judge is holding a grudge
 I try to get her to release me but she won't budge
 I guess I just have to wait and see 'till the day when I'll
 be free.

-Manuel

Window

As I walk through the five bedroom house
 hearing my mom call out for her spouse.
 A window seems to attract my eye.
 The scenery is so beautiful
 I can't believe.
 I see a world of totally different from mine.
 A smile on my face
 I approach the window
 with a slow step under my feet.
 My mom grab me and says
 "child what do you see?"
 I wonder why the animals and the bugs can be so free.
 Trapped between these walls
 I'm asking God why me
 I break down and cry from misunderstanding
 it's not the impossible what I'm asking for
 it's freedom, I'm demanding.

-Taylor

Looking Out The Window

I'm looking out the window
 And all I see is rain
 In the shadow of these incarcerated walls
 Feeling nothing but pain
 Trying to figure out what's out
 There for me to claim

I'm looking out the window
 Asking myself why do I
 Feel so much pain
 Searching for my own shadow
 To claim
 Feeling sorrow wondering
 If I will find a star
 To follow
 Tryin' to understand why
 God can't promise us
 Tomorrow
 Stuck in these incarcerated walls
 No contact with anyone
 Unless it's letters and
 short phone calls

I'm looking out the window
 Hoping I'll live to see
 Tomorrow
 But yet I'm still looking
 Out my window.

- Monic

Big Change

Hey I'm suffering from my own mistakes that almost cost
 me to end my life. I thought nobody ever love me 'cause
 I got lied to too many times and heart broken, so I acted
 like the monster within me, so I started doin my own
 thing which was bad, sometimes it was a good decision.

Now I'm stuck in jail to see if I can rebuild the love
 and shattering glass pieces and my heart, so I get on my
 knees and pray for help by asking God to be there.

Now I've been locked up almost four years and I seen
 a big change in life. I got a girlfriend, soon to be my wife
 and baby momma and love soul-mate, OK, 'cause I took
 the time to play the games and learn from my mistakes.

Now I'm getting out and found a love, and goin'
 somewhere nice to play football for a period of adjustment
 so I can be repaired in life and come successful.

Jail made me think about life, how precious life is
 and how I should live so I regret doin' all this, but I don't,
 'cause I wouldn't have found the love of my life.

-Keon

*A window seems
 to attract my eye.
 The scenery is so beautiful
 I can't believe.
 I see a world of totally
 different from mine.
 A smile on my face*

Pain Don't Hurt

To escape life
 I put the razor blade to my arm
 I cut endlessly but
 Pain don't hurt me

To show my mom that
 She hurted me when she left
 I take a knife and stab myself
 In the stomach but yet
 Pain still doesn't hurt me
 And I cry helplessly at night
 For all the people on the streets
 That's not making it in life

As I hit up the nearest drug house
 Thinking it can take away my agony
 I shoot my vein up with the largest
 Dose of heroin as possible but
 Pain still doesn't hurt me

So to prove to life that
 I don't give a damn about it
 Still high as hell
 I jump off a bridge
 Since pain couldn't hurt me

-T

From The Beat: Project WHAT! is no joke when it comes to working with the children of incarcerated parents and their commitment to spreading their good work in the community. The week we are thrilled to include Kyle Sporleder's story this week. He definitely takes us on a journey, of what life was like growing up in his family, particularly with his father. As always, we readers of The Beat Within want to thank not only the fantastic writers, but director, Anna Wong, for allowing The Beat Within's readership a glimpse into the Project WHAT! world.

Kyle's Story

During his life, a boy expects to receive a great deal of love, happiness, and security from his parents. He expects his parents to be dependable and to provide him with the aid and guidance necessary for him to thrive and succeed in life. However, in my life, these expectations were never met. My name is Kyle and I'm now 17 years old. I have been facing constant disappointment and discouragement for as long as I can remember. During my life, my parents have raised me, loved me, taught me, and tormented me without repose. And, I haven't deserved it.

My father is and has always been the main source of my family's ongoing heartache. He met and married my mom when he was 20 years old; my mom was 23. He was a non-graduate of high school, unemployed, and without his own family to support him. When he met my mom, I think he saw his anchor, a person to help him hold his life together, to support him, and to keep him from further damaging his future. They stayed happily married for about a year and a half. Then, he began to heavily drink.

Two tremendously unexpected events had occurred. His mother had just died and my mother had become pregnant with me. The death of his mother and the overall stress of his life caused him to continue drinking. His life spiraled downward from the mixture of his alcoholism and depression. Then, his condition began to affect not only him, but also his friends and family. He began to exhibit bi-polar tendencies, unbelievably jolly one minute, and murderously violent the next.

Eventually, the inevitable happened: he struck my mom. One night, after coming home from a bar, he entered the house, walked upstairs into his bedroom, and forcefully pulled my mom out of bed. He started screaming at her with unprecedented rage, blaming her for all of his problems. My mother tried to calm him, but he was beyond reason and he continued to rave. Then, he grabbed her by the hair, and threw her, with all of his might, down the stairs. She was 7 months pregnant with me at the time. Luckily, the neighbors called the police. Upon their arrival, my mother was put into an ambulance and sent to San Francisco General Hospital. My father was arrested. This event began the long and painful journey of domestic violence that my family would eventually embark on.

When I was 11, more than a decade later, my father had been arrested many more times, and I had begun to become more aware of my family's situation. My father had stopped drinking, though he had begun to use various types of recreational drugs, and my mother would argue with him regularly, sometimes with the dispute ending in violence. My father had also started to invite his "friends" to live with us. Every week we housed another 3 or 4 nearly homeless drug-addicts that my father had befriended in the months of his substance abuse. This was around the time that I realized I wasn't happy.

I was confused. At the time, I didn't understand that what my dad and his friends were doing was wrong. I didn't understand why he and my mom would fight so much, and most of all, I didn't understand why my family had to be so unhappy. I wanted to talk to someone about how I felt, but I couldn't think of whom. I thought about talking to my friends, but I felt embarrassed. I also thought about telling my church's pastor about my family's issue, but I was scared that something horrible would happen. I had seen on TV what happened to dysfunctional families: they would be split up. I didn't want to leave my mom or my little sister and brother.

So, I tried to talk to my uncle and aunt. They were my favorite relatives and if I was going to tell anyone, then it was going to be them. Luckily, I knew my aunt's number by heart, so I called her. The following day, she and my uncle came to pick me up, telling my mom that they just wanted to take me to the movies.

Project What!!

The story that follows is an ongoing series from Bay Area youth sharing firsthand what it's like to have a parent in prison or jail. These young authors, all of whom participate in a program called Project WHAT! —We're Here and Talking, will continue to be featured in upcoming issues of The Beat Within. We hope you like what you have read thus far! The common thread tying together these authors' stories is that each of them has had a parent incarcerated. Not all of the youth focus directly on their parent's incarceration, but they write about their own struggles, successes, dreams, and goals. This week's story is by Marriah Humphrey. We hope the stories inspire you and give you insight into these young people's lives.

I am proud to be the Program Director of Project WHAT! As Program Director, I have the opportunity to work closely with the talented and courageous group of teenagers and young adults who make up our team. Project WHAT! creates opportunities for the team to empower themselves and educate others by speaking out about parental incarceration.

Project WHAT! is a program of Community Works, a nonprofit organization based in Berkeley, California. For more information, and to access the resource guide, call us at (510) 486-2340 or go online to: www.community-works-ca.org/programs/projectwhat.html. If you're a young person who has a parent incarcerated and want a copy of our resource guide, we'll mail you a free copy. We hope you enjoy these stories.

-Anna Wong
Program and Policy Director, Project WHAT!

After we left the house, I told them everything. I told them about what my dad was doing. I told them about my parents' continuous arguments. I told them about how scared my siblings and I were. And lastly, I told them that I wasn't happy anymore. They listened to me silently, without expression. Then, my uncle spoke. He told me not to worry about anything, and that he would handle it. I was so immensely relieved. Finally, someone was going to help me. I didn't have to deal with this issue alone anymore. I was saved.

Oh, was I wrong. The next day my mom confronted me. She smacked me across the face and started yelling at me. She was furious that I thought that I could just spread "our family's business" and do so without telling her. My dad heard her yelling. He found out what she was angry about and he beat me.

I'll never forget that night. I cried myself to sleep, cupping my wet face, decorated with scattered bruises. No one was going to help me. The help my uncle and aunt had offered had been pushed aside, and disregarded. My mom had convinced my aunt that there was nothing wrong and that she was going to handle everything. My mom had lied out of shame, and her lies had condemned me. I was a prisoner of my own family, and I would have to endure the disintegration of my faith, my faith in my parents, my faith in myself, my faith in everything.

Three years later, I was 14 years old, nearly graduated from 8th grade, and ready to go on to high school. The morning of my graduation ceremony was a typical, muggy day in San Francisco. I woke up at dawn, showered, ate breakfast, brushed my teeth, and got dressed. There was chaos all around my house, but it was a controlled chaos. My sister, Lindsay, and my brother, Shane, were getting dressed too. My mom had been helping them prepare, and they looked great. My sister was wearing a long, flowing dress with a soft blue hue, and my brother was in a navy blue suit; he even had a little clip-on tie. Honestly, they looked like two miniature angels, though I'd never tell them that.

My mom was trying to get ready too, but my father was impeding her progress. They were arguing over money. My father wanted more money to "fix the car," but in actuality, he merely

continued on next page

continued from previous page

wanted to buy more drugs. By this time, my father had begun using cocaine, speed, and heroine. I didn't realize the severity and danger of these drugs at the time, but now I feel sick to my stomach just writing about them. As they fought, I simply sat in a chair with my brother and sister, watching them. The normalcy with which we treated that morning appalls me to this day. We were so used to my parents fighting that nothing seemed wrong, even when my parents began to grapple.

My father was attempting to wrench my mother's money out of her hands. Miraculously, my mom was able to pull away from him and run outside to the car. I followed her, and so did my siblings, yet my father grabbed them as they neared the door. He said that they weren't going, and that the only person that was going to be present at my graduation was my "bitch" mom. I hated him for doing that to me. My mom and I got into the car and drove to my school. She was crying, but for some reason, I wasn't. When we got there, I ran inside the church, where the ceremony would be held. I didn't turn back to see if my mom followed.

20 minutes later, the graduation ceremony was about to begin. As I got ready to line up with my friends, I heard a scream, my mother's scream. I ran outside along with many other people, and on the steps of the church were my parents. Apparently, my father had decided to come to my graduation anyway. However, while they were arguing, I heard some things, as did everyone else in the crowd. My dad was just here for the money. My mom refused to relent, so he tried to take the camcorder from her. Maybe he thought that he could get some money for it, but he was my dad and that was the camcorder that was supposed to record my graduation. Then, my dad left. Luckily, he had forgotten Lindsay and Shane, so they were able to stay. After the ceremony, many people congratulated me for my awards and such. When we got outside, my mom apologized to me. Then, we all went to a nearby restaurant in order to celebrate. Everyone came, my family (with the exception of my father), my friends, their families, my teachers: everyone.

When we got there, I excused myself from the group. I needed a moment alone. I was so angry about my father. I felt dismal, fed up. I was so incredibly weary, at only 14 years old. I was sick of the hell that my family was being exposed to daily, and I wanted it to end. I just didn't understand why it was all happening. So, I sat down, and cried.

Less than a year later, I was a freshman in high school, and I had been kicked out of my house, forced to live with friends. My father had continued to physically abuse my mother and me, as well as psychologically assault my brother and sister. I had been fed up for a long time, and I was finally ready to fight back. My father had been trying to force my mom to give him money and they had ended up struggling with one another. My siblings were watching and crying from fear and emotional pain. I thought about it for a second, and then tackled my father. I managed to get him off my mom, but I didn't do much more than that.

After hitting me a few times, he turned back to my mother. So, I ran to the phone and threatened to call the police. My parents shouted for me to stop, both of them. I never knew why my mom had always protected my father all of those times that the police had come for him. But, now I know. She protected him out of love, misplaced love, but still love. Afterward, my mom managed to calm down my dad, and then she asked me to leave. She told me to pack my stuff and either go to my friend Darrell's or Michael's house. I didn't even really think about what she was trying to do. All I knew was that, I couldn't live with my friends. They had plenty of problems of their own, some nearly as serious as mine.

But, my mom convinced me to go. She said that my father would hurt me and that she couldn't do anything about it. I felt betrayed, hurt, and hopeless. Regardless of everything my father had put us through, my mother still loved him. So, I left. I packed most of my things, said a surprisingly dry-eyed goodbye to my brother and sister, and left. My mom drove me to my friend's house, helped me get all my stuff out of the car, gave me about 100 dollars in cash, and went back home, to the home that I had just left. I stood there silently with Darrell's arm across my shoulders, and I cried. I didn't see my mom or any of my family again for another 3

months. Without the kindness and generosity of Darrell and his father, I truly don't know what I would've done. Living with him also strengthened me as a person because it helped me gain the will to persevere. Yet, Darrell was 17-years old when I moved in; soon he'd be a legal adult and cease living with his father.

So, one year later when Darrell graduated, I went to live with two of my other close friends, Michael and Anthony. They were brothers and they lived with their father. Although their father demonstrated the generosity of allowing me to live in their home, he understandably couldn't also assume the responsibility of being a dependable parent for me. They had their own problems and I was just grateful for having a place to sleep at night.

Altogether, I ended up living with friends for over a year and a half. My gratitude toward them is immeasurable. I couldn't have retained my health and sanity without them. During my time away from home, my mother would try to drop off some money or food monthly. It wasn't nearly enough. Then, she started visiting me less often. Even without having to pay for rent or utilities, it was a struggle. Eventually, I felt the need to get a job.

I ended up working two positions, one as a sort of paperboy for the S.F. Chronicle and another as an office cleric at S.F. State University. With these two jobs on top of my challenging school work, my stress level began to rise. As my grades began to suffer, I decided to stop working. Luckily, my friend Darrell was working and he would lend me money. With the combination of the stress from work, school, and my life, my grades began to drop. I nearly failed three of my classes, but I managed to work strenuously for the next month, and I brought my grades back up. But, my situation seemed dire and I had nearly lost all hope.

However, a month later, I got back in contact with my mom and she started to help me out again. She even brought my brother and sister to see me. I had missed them so much and I was glad to see them, but my feeling of joy dissipated when they told me about what they were going through. After hearing about the torment my father was causing them, I felt like I had abandoned them. I begged my mother to let me come back home, but she denied me, saying that I'd only make things worse. Eventually, I went to my house anyway. I expected it to be a short visit, but it actually ended up changing my life.

When I arrived, my parents were fighting, so I instinctively called the police. When they got there, they took my father away. Supposedly, there had been an active court order for him to stay away from my mom, my siblings, and me. He had violated a restraining order that I hadn't even known existed. Although I was unbelievably happy, I still cried. My father had used to talk to me when I was younger, and he had told me about how horrible prison was and how much he hated it. And I had just sent him there for at least a year. My mixed feelings tortured me with confusion and my heart burst with relief as well as guilt.

Now, I'm living back at home and I have been for the past 10 months. So, you see, this issue is recent and still very active. I'm still working on dealing with my family's issue. My father is now out of jail, but I haven't seen him. I'm trying to get a restraining order against him for me and my siblings. Interaction with my mother is improving. She seems to be finally realizing that her love has blinded her. I understand that it's hard; constant doses of reality can sometimes be painful, and dreadfully shocking, but it is necessary. Lindsay and Shane are doing better than ever, performing well in school, making tons of friends, being somewhat kind to me when they're not pestering, and overall, growing up fairly well by my judgment. But the future is still uncertain, and all I can do is hope for the best.

During his life, a boy expects many things. But, much of the time, those expectations aren't fulfilled; they're never fulfilled. When a boy grows to be a young man, and after he has endured a certain amount of struggles, pain, and disappointment, he realizes that he was naïve for expecting his expectations to be fulfilled. If one never expects, then it's unlikely they'll be disappointed. Though, now that boy has hopes and dreams. He knows that those hopes and dreams might not necessarily come true; he is no longer naïve. But, it'd be nice for something to go right for a change.

- Kyle Sporleder, Project WHAT!

Mom

You were always too busy
 Getting drunk or high
 To realize your little girl
 Was going through a rough time.
 I'll never understand
 Why you chose addictions over me
 Is it really that hard to be . . .
 A loving mom who's there for me
 You know, Mom, you really hurt me
 All those times you pushed
 And told me how much
 you didn't want me
 I want you to know that even after
 All the things you've done to me
 I forgive you for everything
 You're my mom no matter
 What you've done
 I can't take it no more, Mom
 It's either drugs or me
 Choose one or the other
 I'm so sorry, but
 That's how it's got to be
 You are my mom and
 I will always love you,
 But if you choose drugs
 Then just let me be
 'Cause I deserve more
 Than just a drug addict mom
 You're all that I've got
 That's why it's so hard to just give up
 But as days turn into months
 And months into years
 You're still here . . .
 Doing what you've always done
 I'm sorry but I
 Can no longer sit around
 And watch you die
 More and more each and every day
 So maybe one day
 You will stop but
 Until then I'll see you again
 Just remember I will always love you.

-Kandy, Durango, Maricopa County

From the Beat: You've done a beautiful job on this poem communicating the mixed emotions that come with have a substance-abusing parent. I'm sure it's been very painful at times not to have your mom be addicted to drugs. Change is slow and painful, at times, and a process that cannot be rushed if it is to work. Are you & Mom willing to take the time to make what you have work? Although your mom may never change, we hope that you do not repeat the same mistakes with your kids. Use the pain that you've felt from living with a drug addicted parent to make better decisions so your own children will not have to live with the same pain.

Thinking Outside The Box

Well Beat, when I think outside the box is when I end up leaving my room. When I'm in the courtyard, working out, or when my parents come and visit me. They talk about when they went to the Niner's game or when they went to L.A., or just went out with the family.

I also think out side the box when we just go right outside the unit to the Juvie garden that we are trying to plant. We go out there only once a week on Saturdays and that's the closest we get to freedom.

My mind also travels back when I was not getting into trouble with the law. Sometimes my mind travels to when I used to live in Hawaii for a couple of years. It was life out there.

Well Beat staff about to lose his voice yelling "Wrap it up!" All right.

-Giant Samoa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You gave us enough details that we could feel that sense of freedom — even limited — you get from leaving your cell, and from hearing stories that take you out of here. This is good writing. How old were you when you lived in Hawaii? Did you go to school there? Which one?

I'll never understand

Why you chose addictions over me

Is it really that hard to be . . .

A loving mom who's there for me

Mama Is Just A Lil' Girl

Mama is just a lil' girl
 Lost in this world
 Mama is just a lil' girl
 Living in this world full of hate
 When she was about eight
 She was raped by her uncle
 But everybody in my family acts like they don't know
 though
 Mama is just a lil' girl
 Mama has been abused by drugs
 Mama is just a lil' girl
 Mama is going to sometimes cry
 Mama is just a lil' girl
 She doesn't know any better
 that's why I'll always be by her side
 when she goes through the rough weather
 Mama is just a lil' girl
 Mama is going to laugh and smile
 Mama is going to be here for a while
 Mama is just a lil' girl
 Now everybody wants to judge her
 Now she's the one to blame
 Because she's shooting up in her vein
 But they don't know that she's changed
 Under God's name mama is just a lil' girl.

-Estephen, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: How interesting that you see the child-like heart of your mother despite the rough life she has lived. You are obviously an insightful young man who is full of compassion for your mother. Do you have this same compassion for yourself? To what extent do you see yourself and your mother as victims of your circumstances? At what point are you, your mother, responsible for choices made? It seems you believe that your mother's life is redeemable. Do you believe the same about your life? We believe you are capable of making the most of your life, one day at a time.



God Has Answered My Prayers

I was so lost out there in the world and so caught up in
 the game
 Nothing but violence went through my mind and I was
 always trying to bang
 But oh, now I changed and the Lord Jesus Christ is my
 witness
 I repented from my sins and asked God for forgiveness
 But it took me a while to realize that this is what I had
 to do
 First I had to take a look back on my life and see all the
 things I've been through
 God let me go through all these things. He used them as
 a sign
 To see that the streets bring me nothing but death,
 pains, and lies
 I knew it wasn't right, but at the same time, I didn't care
 if it was wrong
 It was all breaking me down, making me weak, and I
 thought it would make me strong
 But now that I've been saved by Christ Jesus, I'm more
 stronger than ever
 Changed all my sinful ways, and now my life is a whole
 lot better
 I can't feel no more hate towards another man, even if he
 is disrespecting me
 I just ask God to bless his heart. I now have love for my
 enemies
 And I start to see that they are lost, just how I used to be
 Every night I pray for them, hoping they will be saved,
 just like me
 I thank God, for he has answered my prayers, and
 blessed me with the Holy Spirit
 And now that I am, I rejoice, because I can understand
 the Word of God
 When I hear it
 A Son of God,

-Savioso

From The Beat: We are interested in how you moved from banging in the game to reading the Bible and taking the message of Jesus to heart. We like your ending, "A Son of God," because we think that all human beings are the children of God, which means that if you hate or act violently against another person, you're really spitting in God's face, disrespecting His creation. What are your plans for when you walk out of here?

My Sister

On 9-22-07 at visiting, my mom came to see me. As I was about to sit down, I thought something was wrong because my mom looked like she was about to cry.

Instead she told me that one of my sisters that I've never met, seen, or talked to, found my older sister on Myspace and asked her if her mom's name was Brigitte and of course my sister said yeah, that she was her oldest daughter.

Well I never met her because she was taken from my mom at four days old and now has a family with some people that adopted her. When she talked to my mom she told her that she looks a lot like me, except with blue eyes.

Well can't wait to get out to meet my new 12 year old sister. Oh yea lil sis Julia if you locked up again you'll be reading this in The Beat Within. Everyone who reading this keep your head up.

-Alexis, Alameda

From the Beat: What an incredible story! So often, the pieces we publish in The Beat are about loss and grief. It is a true pleasure to be able to write about the joy of a family reconnecting and discovering each other. We hope that your "reunion" is wonderful, and of course we can't wait to read about it!

Alice In Neverland

Alice's tunnel vision
 She longs to find its end
 When teacups yell profanity
 So do the voices in your head
 The needle's in the haystack
 Until it ran away with the spoon
 Sidewalks catch on fire
 Cotton balls impending doom
 Whispered threats to innocence
 The plastic bleeds brown blood
 Nodding out in Neverland
 My veins are full of mud
 What is false exhaustion?
 Trails of sugar lead the way
 To falling in a "K-hole"
 Laying down in my dark grave
 My Bic's a pathetic nightlight
 It lights the way to hell
 Addiction, of course, hasn't touched me
 Or I just don't kiss and tell
 I feel my chest go up, then down
 With breaths so weak and faint
 I feel the pain surround me
 I'm coming down like acid rain
 Forgive me, momma, for the broken promise
 I'm poisoning my system
 Long live the evil chemicals
 But not so much their victims

-Lemmings, San Francisco

From The Beat: How much of what you describe so powerfully in this nightmare vision is what you are experiencing in your head? Besides putting this scenario on our pages, do you talk about what you see or hear with anyone you trust — maybe a psychologist, a teacher or a counselor? Re

Dream Vacation Out Of Juvenile Hall

A dream vacation would be out of this box called jail,
 juvenile hall, or cell.
 To be free from the justice system,
 to be able to eat what you want, go where ever you want
 with out being search,
 go to the bathroom with out asking permission,
 brush your teeth at anytime,
 take a shower at anytime.
 Out of juvenile hall and jail would be the dream
 vacation.
 The only way to obtain this dream vacation is to hope
 and have patience
 until it is time for that vacation to come.
 For some that dream vacation may never come and all
 they could do is dream
 of vacation and think about it everyday.
 When your incarcerated your dream vacation can only
 be that sweet taste of freedom.
 All we can do is just gather up that hope,
 like people save money for their dream vacation,
 to someday let it out like people spend money on their
 dream vacation.
 For us incarcerated people our dream vacation is
 freedom
 to make it a permanent vacation
 never returning to this home call juvenile hall, jail or
 prison.

-John, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We really like the way you wrote this piece. We think that would be the greatest vacation for many of you, the chance to return home from incarceration and to get a second chance at freedom. Keep the fire burning and that hope that your day will come soon!



Thinking Outside The Box

As I sit here in my cell I wonder. . .
 Why do I think it's bad ass to get drunk and get high?
 Why do I think its badass to gang bang?
 Why do I think its badass trying to be a badass?
 I don't run nothing, in here, the streets, a gang, nothing.
 I walk around thinking life and every thing is cherry, but
 its not.
 I'm scared
 knowing I'm gonna get out and run into the same old
 thing.
 I know hurting my family has hurt me, and it sucks!
 I'm 17 and I need to grow up and move on with life.
 Get my treatment done with, and come home,
 get my probation done, get out of the system, stay out,
 get my GED, a driver's license, get a job, and a car.
 Live it up and leg it.
 Instead of living awful on the streets, and wondering
 where I'd go to sleep.
 Some nights not sleep at all,
 not eating, but smoking rock, glass, heroin, and
 drinking.
 On missions for drugs and money, guns, and just dumb
 shhh.
 Yeah when I was out partying I didn't think about the
 ugly things.
 I never sat down and wondered
 what's going on at home, school, in the clean world.
 Damn, I sit in my room at night looking out the window,
 crying and just on my knees begging for forgiveness,
 but I know our dear Lord forgives all of his children.
 I mean, I'm still young and I have a long life ahead of me.
 Now it's my time to be happy again, and to have harmony
 with my family again.
 Get back on my feet, because I never, ever want to find
 myself
 living in the "monkey hole" (prison), oh hell no,
 when I can be living a good life.
 I never used to believe that there would be any fun
 with out a crack pipe or a 40oz.
 Now I really do believe it all.
 Jail can change some people's thoughts about their life,
 because it has to mine.
 Thanks "Beat" for letting me think outside the box

- Tweety, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Thank you Tweety for being apart of "The Beat" with out you and the other writers we wouldn't be here. Its voices like yours that keeps us going week after week, and looking forward to another week of voices like yours, educating us readers. Now that you know the problems with your life, its time to make that change so you can stay out of the "Monkey Hole" and lead a good life.

I Deserve Love

I've done a lot to deserve love
 I've smiled, I've frowned,
 Tripped and fell down
 I've lost at my own game,
 And felt such intense
 Pain
 I know what it is to feel
 Shame,
 And to be the only one
 Left there is to
 Blame
 I know what it feels
 Like to be all
 Alone
 To feel insecure and not
 Feel at home
 I know what it's like to
 Be fooled by a liar and
 For all your good deeds
 To come around and run you over
 Like a tire
 Pain is experience and with experience
 I grew
 I just sometimes wish
 Back then that I knew . . .

-Elizabeth, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: This is a very well written poem! You've done a very impressive job of communicating the wide range of emotions that you have felt. We hope that the painful things you've been through have given you the wisdom to make better choices for yourself in the future. What is the most important thing you've learned? What are you committed to do differently? Although it may seem that with everything you've been through there's not much left to learn, take the good advice of older, wiser people in your life so you don't have to keep learning the hard way.

I believe that many people get mistreated because of some authorities' judgments.

Cloudy Judgment

The US has many amendments that have been added to our constitution. Even with these amendments, the US is still not perfect.

The protectors of these laws are people just like their abiders. The police officers, detectives, FBI agents etc. are all normal people with opinions and judgments of their own. So when they have another person's life in their hands, their judgments could be clouded by their past happenings.

I believe that this makes the justice system corrupt. Because someone's future can depend on how that authority is feeling that day. I believe that many people get mistreated because of some authorities' judgments.

-Tyler, SEF, Maricopa County

From The Beat: They say that with great power comes great responsibility. It may be true that not everyone in power uses it correctly. The system becomes corrupt because of those in it. It is also a powerful tool when there is a balance of opinions and a check and balance. Is it possible that changes could be made to the justice system that would improve how it works? Do you have any ideas about what these changes could be? In the meantime you do have control and responsibility for your own choices and so we challenge you to discover what changes you will need to accomplish in your life to maintain your freedom and use your analytical mind for good. This is a very well written, well thought out critical piece, by the way.

Trapped

I watch the tears slowly swell in his green eyes. He turns towards the window to hide them, but there is nowhere to hide in the car. We are so close I can feel his shallow breaths against my arm. I squeeze my teary eyes shut and try to think. Try to remember how it got to this. How it all lead to this fate. It only takes a minute for my mind to begin spinning, the last week's events fresh in my mind once again.

I lived in a shelter. It was like a home only with different parents every few hours and many teenage brothers and sisters. I was comfortable and happy. I was out of jail and finally had a warm bed, good food, and a roof over my head filled with people who cared about me. Then it changed. The staff stopped caring, my 'siblings' stopped being so friendly, and I was so unhappy I could feel the pain every moment my heart beat. The time passed and the shelters atmosphere slowly started getting back to normal. That's when I met him. One warm day after school, I walked into my home, heat exhausted and satisfied with my decisions that day. The first thing I noticed when I walked through the door was Skyler. His big green eyes contrasted with his jet black hair and perfect smooth skin. All I could do was stare and drink in his beauty.

That night I confessed my crush to him. And he too admitted he had been watching me. Giddy with this new attraction we sat and talked all night. I began to feel like I already knew him, like we were meant to be together.

After a while Shy came outside to join us on the picnic tables. Shy was a girl I had befriended at the shelter. She had come up with this plan to run, that included her boyfriend Sean, Skyler, and me. We were going to all run to Las Vegas and it was going to be the time of our lives. It didn't take me much convincing, for I wanted to run and begin a new life with Skyler. In turn, Skyler had agreed that he really liked me and wanted to take care of me, no matter what happened.

That night we all complained of sleepiness as we slowly trudged to our rooms. Five minutes later my foot hit the screen, as I kicked out the remaining barricade. Soon after, my bag followed, then me. My feet began moving as soon as they hit the concrete. I stealthily crouched and ran until I met the bushes by the road. I hid and waited for the rest of my friends to follow.

Ten minutes later, I watched as Shy sprinted through the tall grass, bag in hand, yelling my name. I waved her over.

We waited for two minutes, until we saw two figures zoom past us. It only took us moments to realize it was Sean and Skyler. We took off after them, until we met up a few yards later. Out of breath, we all sat to take a break in some tall grass close to the shelter. Sean was convinced he could steal a car from a friend. I was skeptical of this particular idea, but once in Skyler's reassuring grip, I settled down.

After about 30 minutes of waiting for his arrival, we felt it was too risky waiting any longer, so we had to leave the meeting place.

As we ran along the street I felt my feet hitting pavement and it was all I could think about. Running far away from everything I had worked so hard to achieve. It was too late to turn back now. We continued running until we reached a deserted Quickie-Mart. We found carpet behind the building, and Shy, Skyler, and I all laid down for the night. It was a cold night, and most of it was spent picking stickers out of my worn feet. I was just happy we hadn't been found and we all had each other to lean on for support.

The next morning I awoke with the sun. My neck ached and my body shook with iciness.

Soon after, Skyler and Shy awoke. We ventured into the open road as we looked for a restroom. When we were done we found a bus stop and waited an hour for the bus to arrive and take us to the train depot downtown.

Once inside the train station, I finally felt at ease as we were assured tickets to Las Vegas. Then it all went down hill. Our hook up failed us and could only give Shy a ticket, since it was her step dad.

Skyler and I didn't see it as the end, but merely an obstacle. After an hour of contemplating, we decided to try to get a bus to Belen where he lived.

We realized it was Sunday and were turned down because the buses didn't run on Sunday's. We finally decided we could take the bus to my side of town, sleep in the park for the night, and get on the earliest bus the next morning.

Once on my side of town, I was familiarized with the streets and took us to an open park where we would look less noticeable along with all the other teen couples enjoying a relaxed day in the sun.

It seemed like hours before it began to rain and slowly people left the park. Once I was sure the coast was clear, Skyler and I crawled into a kiddy tube on the playground and laid down for the night.

Half way through the night I awoke to half my entire body being numb. The tube could not hold both of us comfortably. We found a nice spot, shaded by trees and layed my unused clothes down against the wet ground, and again braved sleep.

We awoke yet again to a vicious down pour that sent us into the tube. We stayed up waiting for it to pass, and when it did we weren't so tired anymore.

We waited until dawn and walked ten minutes to my parents' house. I tried to take a shower, but my older sister was home, and informed me that the cops were searching for me, so Skyler and I were forced to leave and catch the nearest bus.

Even though I was exhausted and starving I still felt this was a great adventure, as me and Skyler laughed about all our troubles until everyone on the city bus could not help but stare at us and smile. To them, we probably seemed like nothing more than a teenage couple on our way to eat.

We arrived at the bus depot too late and had to wait for the next bus that arrived at 12:30pm. I didn't really mind; having a plan was good enough to put me at ease.

Around ten o'clock I ran into a friend from the shelter. She informed me of everything that happened since my departure from the shelter. She continued to say that she missed me and would do anything to help me. She gave me and Skyler some money to eat and I promised to stay in touch with her as much as I could.

At 12:30 we were on the bus bound for our new hopes. Once in Belen, a friend of Skyler's recognized him right away and picked us up. After all we had been through, this felt like a miracle.

Even more of a miracle happened once his friend, Dennis, said he had a two-bedroom apartment to himself. We had a new haven, a warm place, full of food and shelter and a shower. It took all I had not to jump on Dennis and kiss him. We got to the apartment and immediately took a shower. It felt so good to be clean again. I dressed up, then Skyler, Denny and I all took a trip to Wal Mart. Denny bought me everything I needed including make up and a hair dryer. I thanked him over and over. We got home and finally sunk into the soft couches and talked.

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The next week basically went the same. Denny went to college and me and Skyler stayed home and sometimes went to his brother's house, where we got high, and waited for Denny to get home. The two "men" would drink while I watched a movie or chatted on the phone. Skyler and I grew closer together and slowly fell in love. We did everything that we possibly could together including showering, eating, sleeping and even getting my lip pierced while he was getting his tattoo. I loved waking up every morning to his beautiful smile as we wasted time just laying next to each other and smiling without having to say a single word. I hoped this high I was on would never end. This new high I called life.

Little did I know we were about to face the hardest thing ever, separation.

It was mid-evening. I remember it so freshly that I can see it when I close my eyes, replaying over and over in my head. Denny was sitting on a chair and Skyler and I were cuddling on the couch. Skyler and I had just finished getting high so we were laughing at every noise the TV made and every face Denny made. We sobered up as soon as we heard the pounding fist against the door. Skyler's face suddenly turned pale as he said aloud, "It's Denny's parents." I knew he had meant to say it to himself in surprise. He grabbed my hand and rushed me into Denny's room where we hid in the closet.

It seemed like only minutes went by before Denny somberly walked in and said we were caught. Then everything went in a blur. I heard Denny's dad telling us to get out and that we were never aloud to see Denny again and that he was calling the Police and calling us in as runaways.

Skyler just gave up. It was the end to him. He sat on a rock as we watched Denny's parents drive away to the police station. I got on my knees in front of Skyler and begged him to just keep going. I tried to tell him that we got so far and we shouldn't give up now.

After thirty minutes I realized the police weren't coming. With many minutes of persuasion from Skyler's brother, Skyler finally decided to get up. I was overjoyed that our journey together wasn't over. But it was. I was trapped.

Skyler had a place to stay in Colorado that couldn't take me right away. He and Denny told me it was best that I turn myself in. That I should go back to the shelter and they would accept me and at the worst they would just send me to another shelter.

I let the plan sink in and finally gave in and took the thirty-minute drive to Albuquerque, New Mexico. The first twenty minutes were full of tears and anger as I thought me and Skyler were over. It was done. But I couldn't let it end because of a detour. I tried to kiss Skyler and beg him to listen to me but all he could do was push me away and say over and over, "You're just making this harder babe." The last ten minutes were full of happy tears and laughter as I clung to Skyler, as Denny he and I recalled all the past moments we had together. Once we got to the shelter I kissed Skyler goodbye and waved to Denny.

It truly was over. I was trapped. I walked into the shelter and waited the excruciatingly twenty minutes while the shelter decided if they could take me or not. I found out then that I had two warrants out for my arrest. And that was the end. I couldn't even let a tear escape my eye as the officer told me my rights and tightened my handcuffs.

All I could think about was Skyler driving away, free. I wanted more than anything to be back in his arms. In those few minutes I decided I would do anything to try and reach him again and let him know that I was in jail. And that is exactly what I did.

I've been in jail exactly two weeks today. I patiently await his phone call telling me that he has made it safely to Colorado. For all I know he may still be in Belen right now. But that doesn't matter. I look forward to the day we will meet again.

As for now, all I can do is hear his voice every few days telling me he is waiting for me and he loves me. From all this I have learned a very important lesson. You should always put your self before others.

- Jessica, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's amazing what we do for a little fun, excitement, and love. Thank you, Jessica, for this fabulous detailed love story, it was easy to follow your steps until you found your self locked up. Continued writing we at The Beat would love to hear more. Keep us posted!



Boxed In Or Out?

Q-vole Beaters! It's Chucy once again in this trapped box. I always think to myself why did I put myself in this position. But it's not a matter of being in here now because I am already here, right? So I manage myself to think myself outside the box. That was my problem when I first got here (six months ago). Always worrying about my time and my case. Now time ain't really nothing. I allow it to pass by. I even forget the dates of my court because they just continue it over and over.

But then again there are times where I do sit in my room and contemplate on the outside world. I think about all my loved ones and my associates and wonder if they are thinking of me too!

I feel like I had this experience for a reason. To wake up! I was living life in the fast lane and eventually crashed. Now it's all up to me to stay down or rise up. My choices are to think outside the box and rise up! Because time is ticking and I don't have much time to make a decision if I wasn't to stay in or out of the box. Stay in the slow lane.

- Chucy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Some people feel the cold bucket of water in their face and they wake up. Others just shake it off and go back to sleep. Good for you for waking up. Don't put off the changes you know you have to make thinking there is still time.

"Let's Take A Walk"

As I hear the door lock, knowing there is no escape, no one for help, my heart pumps so fast, I feel a rush run through me.

My body feels numb. In an instant I'm filled with complete fear, knowing what is coming my way. Next thing I know I'm being punched and kicked laying on the floor, trying to hold in my tears. I beg and plead for the beating to stop...

I told him everything there was to know about me. I had this guilt inside me that obligated me to confess. But if only I knew what I had waiting for me, I would have never confessed...

His parents knew, they had to hear the beating going on, but there was nothing they can do. No matter what, he would not care. He threatened to kill himself, putting on his shoes, saying he was going to the train tracks.

I was holding him tight so he wouldn't leave, but then he said, "Let's take a walk."

I was afraid of what he would do if I left him alone. Even though he hurt me in all ways, I would never wish for him to die, so I "took a walk".

Now we're on the train tracks. I'm continuing to be punched and kicked, trying to breath and not to cry, I hold my stomach because of the pain but I'm forced to get my hands straight to my side or else it will be hit more harder. So I do as I'm told, hoping with all of my heart that the beating will stop. The train is now coming our way, I pray to God for me to keep my life. I beg for us to get off the train tracks, but all I get in response is a laugh and that we will die together.

Thinking about my mom, believing this was the end of my short thirteen years of life in the world. Tears ran down my cheeks even more. He held my arm tight, there was no way of escape. I couldn't believe that this could be the end

of my life, all that was going through my head was my family -- and especially my mom and dad.

"What have I done" was what I kept telling myself over and over. The train now being about 75 feet away, maybe even less, out of nowhere he pulls me to the side, both of us jumping out of the train tracks, the train passed us at a very fast rate.

I was cryin' in relief and he was just laughing like it was nothing. He had let go of my arm.

As the train passed us by, there were soldiers on top of the train. He waved good bye at them and I just looked up at them hoping that they would notice something was wrong and help, but what can they do, they're on a train!

I was looking down when he ran away from my side, I looked up and he was running to the train, I opened my eyes wide, I could not believe what he was doing, I felt my heart sink and I screamed his name out to the top of my lungs I did not want to see him die right in front of me. What I didn't realize was that the train ended, he jumped on the train tracks right when the train ended. I ran towards him, I fell to the floor not believing what had almost happened.

I felt weak. I could not and did not want to continue walking. Crying laying on the train tracks and him just laughing, he did just that.

This is an experience that I went through not so long ago. I would not want any other girl or anybody to go through that. Nobody deserves to be treated like that. Now I'm out of that nightmare, but locked up, but I'm happy I'm alive and I still got my family.

-Anonymous, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We almost regret that you kept your name anonymous on this shattering, frightening, and oh so powerful piece. You should be so proud of writing this down, proud enough to attach your name to it, because of the wisdom you reveal at the end of your horrible journey: Nobody deserves to be treated like that. We hope you hold on to these words that came from your won strong hand, we hope you know that you, your happiness, and your life are precious! You turned one of the most terrible experiences of your life into a story with a message we should all hear! Thank you.

Only thing keeping me from the end zone wasn't the defenders, but it's me 'cause I'm locked up.

Thinking Outside the Box

(Chorus)

I doze off and start to daydream.

Thinkin' outside the box,

Thinkin' about a better place

Wit' the doors unlocked

(Verse 1)

As I start to doze off, far deep in my thoughts.

I think about places that I could've been

Or new things I could've bought.

Sportin' some new shhh

Sportin' some new kicks,

Eatin' some real food,

Drinkin' some real drank

And ain't gotta be in a place filled with dudes that hella stank.

Picture me rollin' in my ride wit' my girl.

Going to different places, tryin' to explore the world.

Damn! Can you picture me with the world in my palms

And with my sexy baby all cuddled up in my arms.

(To be continued....Sorry y'all Peace.)

-Tiny Samoa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Instead of thinking of these things as what "could have been," why not think of them as things that still can be. Yes, we can picture you with the world in your hands. Can you picture yourself in a safe and free place (a place in your mind as well as your body) where what you're dreaming about could become reality?

Running For A Touchdown!

Things that make me think of the outs are when I'm playing football in the gym. It makes me think about the field at Burton High School where I play for the Burton football team. Just the thought of putting my football cleats and stepping onto the grass, wind blowing or sun beaming down on my helmet and pads. The adrenaline pumping through my body. The thought of getting the ball running over a defender at the line of scrimmage running at full speed reaching the 30 yard line, splitting the two D-backs using a double juke move that gets me past the defenders.

20 yards to go. Only one standing between me and the end zone is the line backer, approaches me at full speed. I stick my left arm out, stiff arm him. He falls. I dive in to the end zone. I hear a whistle. Someone calls my name. It sounds familiar. I turn around. It's one of the staff at YGC. I look around to see I'm still in da gym at YGC, realizing I was just day dreaming.

I just realized the only thing keeping me from the end zone wasn't the defenders, but it's me 'cause I'm locked up. But when I get on the field again I'm "Unstoppable."

-Ameen, San Francisco

From The Beat: We know you've waited a long time to see this Piece Of the Week. We still love it. On one level, we feel the reality of the game, the details of your senses. But on an entirely different level, we love the epiphany of what's really keeping you from the end zone. This is fine writing.

Am I Going to Be Next

So many gone to rest
Wondering am I going to be next
If this is not a test than may I be bless
Before my soul go to rest.
Everything I do I like to stay single, stack
More chips than Cheetos and Pringles
My mind is twisted, life going blisted
Lots of wannabe's talking about they can't be
Touch, they looking for you
while you with your sister
Playing double dutch, everyone prepared for the
Tragedy lots gonna wanna fool ya
and when the trigger goes back—
ka-boo-ya.

-Big Head

From The Beat: Only one way to get untwisted/get on the freedom bus/ last time you missed it/the ticket is free but there is a price/give up the negative that messed up your life/it's worth getting out, rising up ascending/cause no one deserves that gunshot ending.

Tell Me Why

Tell me why I got to go through all this,
tell me why I can't just stay at my group home and stop
running
tell me why I can't trust nobody
not even some family members
tell me why something always gotta happen
when I go to jail
tell me why they put me through so much hell
tell me why the judge talking about the "y"
if I can't do my group home this time?
Tell me why do I steal
even rob people for what they got
to some of my patnas I'm hot
but this time I'm gon' stay at that group home
and get out the system.

-Lil' Damani, Alameda

From The Beat: You see the problem, now it's all on you to succeed at the group home, and if the group home isn't working, don't run, address the issue, call your attorney, your PO so you don't find yourself in front of the judge looking at CYA.

Next Thing You Know...

One day you at home chillin', on the block with a patna, with no worries or stories to tell. You're making that dough and hanging out windows, going crazy, going to school, getting knowledge to go to college.

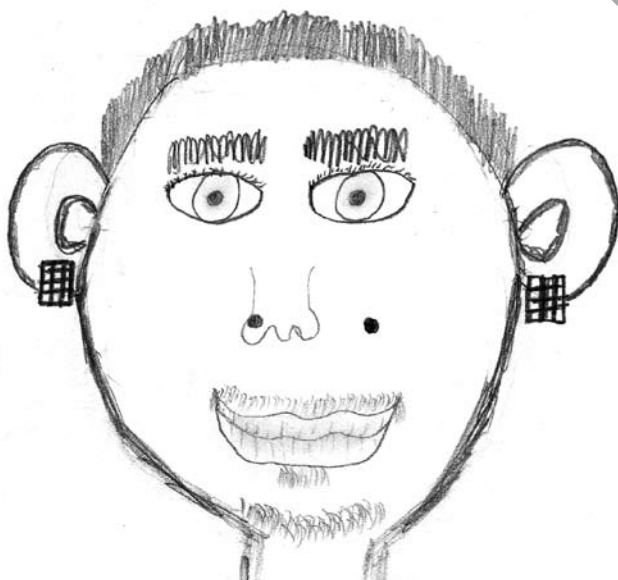
Next thing you know you in the Hall for one mistake, one reckless messed up situation, one accusation. You get misled, set up, caught up, snitch on, whatever. You in here. So what. What now. How do I get out.

I think outside the box. What would I do? The same, but it needs to be changes. While I'm in here I make the best of time because it's precious and they ain't going to take mine. I read, I write, I pray and talk 'till it's nine and my time is up.

Then start over the next day. Time flies if you're occupied -by court dates, recs, school, LME, PE... And so one will make the best of your days if you just go with the program and don't be down in the grave all day -- and succeed!

-Naya, Alameda

From The Beat: Naya, we dug the original way you set this up, building this whole scene to get in the mind frame of a person "in the box" to show us out to get "out of the box." It's like you wouldn't even answer the question in an ordinary box type way!



While I'm in here I make the best of time because it's precious and they ain't going to take mine. I read, I write, I pray and talk 'till it's nine and my time is up.

An Act Of Courage

One time me and my friends were chillin' at a place similar to a coffee shop. It was getting late, and me and my friends were the only ones at the place. It was just four of us.

Out of nowhere 6 or 7 of our enemies came in. At first nothing happened, so we thought they weren't going to start shhh. My two friends went outside to go smoke a cigarette, and then our enemies pulled a chair on my friends. I came outside to see what was going on...then I exchanged words with my enemies then we started fighting. We started fighting in the front then the fight was inside the shop.

The fight stopped for a second then one of the guys that was starting the shhh pulled out a gun on us. He started screaming something but I couldn't hear him 'cause everyone was yelling.

I didn't want him to hurt me and my friends, so I did something to him. Then they all bounced out. When it was all over my two friends that I tried to help came in to ask me what happened I found out a few weeks later that they didn't even do anything. I tried to help my friends and they weren't ever there for me.

I just wanna say be careful who your friends are, because when they say they're down and they're loyal that's just b-s...

I bet if a cop throws 10 years in their face they ain't your friends anymore.

-Xnotoriousviet, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The "friendships" that are built around crime and fighting often don't have a lot of room for being tested, because it's so cold once guns or police get in the mix. Now that you know a little more about what a true friend ISN'T, how would you describe what a true friend IS?

That Bad Advice

The worst advice I ever took was my own. Something told me to go home, but I didn't. I wanted to stay outside even though my first mind was telling me to leave.

I had just seen and watched in something I knew was wrong. And I stayed out. I left the area but was still close to what just happened. Some people left but I was already thinking that. But I decided to go chill at a friend's house. Then later decided to go and eat. And then while eating, I seen the police pass through the window looking hella hard and I thinking like, "Man, I should leave?" But I still tried to get my food.

Next thing you know, the police rushed the food shop with like 15 police. Then they checked us. Took us outside. It was like two paddy wagons, seven black and whites, and six narc cars. It was hella people on da street. They put me in da paddy wagon then took me out. They was taking me across the street. The light was red. So I'm hand-cuffed, hella people watchin', waiting to go across the street at a red light. That was embarrassing.

It's a lot of people that get caught up because they listen to other people. I always tell myself go wit' my first mind, but I didn't and got myself wrapped. Even though all the BS is happening, I know I didn't do anything, so I should get out, and I pray all the time.

Everybody, go wit' you first mind because it would never steer you wrong. If you doing something or just did something and you think about something and then something else, do what you first thought about because that's your common sense talking. Stay up Beat and everybody that reads it. I'm out.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're not sure that everyone has as much common sense as you clearly do, so we're not sure if everyone should follow their first mind... or think about it for a while before acting. In your case, that common sense and conscience is well developed, so we think you should follow your own good advice.

It's a lot of people that get caught up because they listen to other people. I always tell myself go wit' my first mind, but I didn't and got myself wrapped.

Situations

There is a lot of situations, such as good ones and bad one. Sometimes people don't understand how others get in bad situations. Some people take a situation because you are a bad person. I'm in my situation because of where I live. I have to protect myself. I do everything from school to work, provide for my family to pray to the lord.

Sometimes good people get into messed up situations, and it is hard not to get into them because of their environment or what they are going through. Not only people do things because of a turf. Sometimes it's for protection, and that's me, scared for my life so I do what I have to do. Ya dig.

-Young Eweb, San Francisco

From The Beat: Human beings have always found ways to adapt to their environments, so we understand what you are talking about. Without living that environment ourselves, we can't judge your choices. But all choices have consequences, including the things we choose not to do, so weigh your choices carefully, and if you're prepared to accept their consequences, go ahead. Do you foresee a way out of this environment? We suggest school as one likely way to open opportunities for you.

My Life

I ain't never shot a gun in my life,
 But while you in the fight,
 I be on the books by night,
 Not needing pride to stay alive,
 And dat's the truth, no lie,
 When I see the box of my life,
 I pray
 To open up the hope in my eyes,
 For my life,
 Not wanting my family,
 To lose hope and cry,
 And with all my might,
 I'll change my mind,
 And start a new life.

-Halo, San Francisco

From The Beat: What are some of the significant things you have learned by being on those books? Where do you want your education to take you?

Taking Advice

Q-vo Beaters. It's that sexy ass chingon Travieso, coming from the Max unit. Today I'm going to write on taking bad advice.

To me, taking bad advice is like playing Russian roulette. Each time you pull the trigger, you are taking a chance with your life. And the same thing on taking advice 'cause each time someone spits in your ear, it could be poison, just like that chamber with a bullet in it that would end your life. Or it could be one of the empty ones that would give you another chance.

So when you take advice, it's up to you on how you take it and who is giving it to you,

-Travieso, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We appreciate the wisdom in what you've written, but what would make it a much stronger piece is an example or two. You say the chamber is either loaded or not, so give us an example of when taking someone's advice blew up in your face, and an example of when everything turned out okay.

Thinkin' Outside The Box

The most important thing that makes me think outside the box is my unborn son. He will be born in a month.

All my family has been to jail, prison, or Juvenile Hall to CYA. When I think about that, it make me think outside the box, 'cause I want to break that cycle and not let my kid be the way I am and the rest of my fam. The only way I think I could do that is by stayin outta jail. So therefore, I gotta slow down in that fast lane and put a stop to the old bad habits and even hobbies I'm used to doing.

I already love my son too much to even mess up anymore. I'm doing a year, and now I can't see the birth of my boy. That hurts a lot.

So after this, when I get out I'ma be there for him. I don't want him to be like "Where were you at, dad? You weren't even there when I was born." I don't wanna hear that.

I've been through it all. Believe it or not, that hurts. Well I'm gonna cut this here, it's getting too deep and makin' me think and feel guilty. I love you, boy.

-Soldier, Alameda

From The Beat: Our hearts go out to you during this difficult time. You may feel guilty, but there is so much love and hope in what you wrote. Your unborn son has an amazing opportunity to have a father who believes in him. Love is all a child really needs! Your family may not be able to give you the life tools you need to stay out of trouble and learn to be a good parent. Who else can you seek out for guidance and help? You deserve support. We hope that you will stay in touch with The Beat.

Listen To This

My life is screwed as my days go on
 But something is
 Bothering me,
 Haunting me
 And also following me,
 Reminders of the past,
 And growing up too fast.
 I choose to stay hidden by the darkness
 So no one will see my sorrow.
 So no one will see feel the pain that hides tomorrow.
 Listen to this.
 Too many trials, too much time wasted and too many
 tries to be different, but overall too many attempted
 suicides by people,
 A man once said to me
 "The ride is almost over.
 Death has finally arrived but my luck has taken over
 And my Soul Survived that horror
 ...and I'm still standing."
 Listen to this
 Listen up, this is serious talk.
 I want to be educated. Like 2Pac and Martin Luther
 King, we all have dreams.
 We don't want to not succeed
 Listen to this
 The world has many problems, situations, happy times,
 sad times, heartbreakers and sorrows,
 So live it and cherish it and hear out when someone
 says listen to this.
 It's just like the Lord's Prayer.
 Advice that keeps you out of crisis and alive to see
 tomorrow.
 Listen to this,
 That's what I didn't do
 And I ended up back in the darkness of hell.
 Jail.
 Listen to this

-KC Gurl, Alameda

From The Beat: "Listen to this" is right! This is an urgent and powerful call to arms. We hope everyone in the system listens to what you are saying, and that's not just detainees - we also mean the policy makers in the government, to remind them that there are so many youth like you who want an education and a better life. Keep writing, and we'll keep listening!

Some Advice I Should Of Took

When I first came to jail, Ms. Wingate try to tell me the people I was hangin' wit' wasn't cool. I ain't really listen to her, though, I just thought she was sayin' that because they probably used to go dumb on her or something when they was in here. So everything she was tellin' me just went in one ear and out the other.

So when I got out, I went right back to the hood and kept kicking it with them, and then one night, we got caught up and all got arrested. It's a rap. We all got big dope cases and come to find out these ninjas threw all they dope on the van floor and put it all on me, something I never thought they would do. But I guess ninjas will do [what they have to do] to save they own self.

I guess I should of listened when she tried to warn me.

-Lil' Paul, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope that everyone reading The Beat this week will read your piece. This is a story that happens over and over again. Young people like yourself get caught up in criminal activities and then your so-called homies sell you out. It's a terrible feeling, right? It is really cool how you shared this story with The Beat about how Ms. Wingate tried to warn you. Some counselors really do care and they want to help you stay out of trouble! Since you shared your story, maybe another young person will think twice on the outs before making a bad choice.

My Last Chance

This is my last chance to get my shhh straight. My PO said if I don't pass EMP this time, I'll go to CYA. The reason why she gave me this last chance is because I'm about to have a kid and I told her I wanted to be there for my baby unlike my dad. He was never there for me and my brother and sisters.

I grew up to hate my dad, when ever I see that guy I'm going to chin check him. I don't want my kid to hate me so I'm going to be there for him or her. This is the reason why I'm going to try to get my shhh together.

This life is not about me no more it's about my kid.

This is it for now but I'll write more next time. So to all the stay strong. And just to let you know I'll give up some of my ol' ways. This Chicano is out. Alrato.

-Nemo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Bad experiences sure can change us, usually because they scare us into being a different person. If that's what it takes, go with it. Be a wonderful dad; be a dad so great that it fixes all the bad things in your life. This is huge though. Are you really committed to becoming a different person for your baby?

Why?

Waking up in here every morning, refusing to believe he would ever do that to me.

But he did. But why?

Why do I still love him?

Why did he hit me?

I never did nothing wrong.

I hate loving him, but you don't always like the people you love.

I will never go back to him.

Well, I'm going try my best.

He was my best friend try with benefits.

He was always there when I needed him the most, when it was hard to open my eyes and face this messed up life.

I never thought we would ever face this point in our friendship, but we did.

I'm always gonna love you, Julio,

but you hurt me and now this is the way I hurt you.

What goes around comes around. Karma's a b....

-Mousie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is even harder when our friends are the ones who hurt us, especially if they hurt us physically. You talk about the idea of karma, so now your karma is clear and you can move forward.

Facing Myself

What's up Beat! This be Vago up in unit 6. I'ma tell you about my dream I had not to long ago. It was like this, I was in my room and I woke up to a noise. It was my son but he was older, like 16 years old, and he came in. I didn't know at the time, but my BM's send me pictures of him. He look just like me, had my last name and was called Lil' Vago.

But the only thing was, he wasn't banging with me, he was banging against me. So I didn't know what to do. I got up from the table ready to fight him, but the next thing I know I heard the staff wake up call. So I was thinking about my son future and I really do need to be out because I don't want him to gangbang. I want him to go the right way, so I have to show him. I have to do it myself. Well I'm out, y'all dig?

-Vago, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is truly a startling dream. What do you think it was trying to tell you? One thing for sure, you're 100% right that to teach your son "the right way," you have to do it yourself.

In Love

I never been in love
Never had the feelings
I didn't experience happiness with somebody
Nobody ever made me have butterflies in my stomach
But only this special person
Nobody never made love to me
Or sleep or take a shower with me
You respected me
And I actually felt love with you
My first love
And I thank God for the gift
We ain't together no more
But I still think and dream of you
You was a friend, my homie, my lover
We did things that I never did
Or tried or wanted to do with another person
But you, you made me feel and realize
That I'm still in love with you
You are special to me
And if I was able to give you another chance
I will
I never cheated on you
But I know you mad for the choices I made
And let my brother control me
But I'm confused
'Cause I love both of you
And you was my boyfriend
My brother hates you
For cheating on me
But people make mistakes
And I just wanted to share this with you
You will always be in my heart
And, honestly
I can't move on
Or be with anybody else
But you

-Lucero, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can feel how passionately you feel about him. That is why the pain you are now experiencing because he's gone is just as overpowering as the joy you felt when you were with him. Both those emotions are unsettling and keep you off balance. Stop thinking about what your brother wants. Stop thinking of what your boyfriend wants. Start thinking of just you.

Why Do People Hate?

Hate is a word that has flown through time for eons. Hate is a word that can never be hidden from a human being. Everyone experience hate whether it's from watching TV to being a gang member. Hate can be for little or big things to hating bugs to hating terrorist for attacking our home or country.

People hate for a reason it can be personal and some are just for no reason at all. Hate can 'cause us to do horrible and painful things to others, which will 'cause hate for that individual which will ruin there life and his/her own life.

Hate is a powerful emotion and word, yet it can be just as simple and playful word.

But hate is hate, you can never escape that feeling and word, It is a word that will live on till the end of time.

All you can do is to live with it and just learn to love your hate.

- Harry Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your writing here is so clear and clean, like a college students! But we want to step in and challenge that last sentence. Can anything good come of "learning to love our hate?" Isn't that just a way of embracing a dark view of the world, one that can lead to death and sorrow?

Crossing His Back

I can't stop the ink
From leaking onto these pages much longer
It's hard to keep my spirit from spilling the beans
When the book of souls is open
My brain's getting swollen from all this poetry
And I grow words on the poet tree
I'm just putting letters in the right places
'Cause that's where they're supposed to be
And Bob Marley's my inspiration
So I keep his thoughts close to me
My life is a piano
I just gotta play the focus key
And if you listen to it close
The note is me
I am just an ant in a bug fight
No one notices me
The ticket collector says
"Hand me yo' token, please"
So why don't you pass it
And stop chokin' the weed?
We hiding ourselves
Why we clothin' the greed?
He sits back and watch us
Whose our needs
I know a lot of people who rather blow weed
Than read
And I wish I was Eddy on
"A Hundred Good Deeds"
Who am I?
I am just being me

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: You slip in your own revelations a lot of righteous social commentary. You write that nobody notices you, but that doesn't seem right. Maybe when you're quiet, nobody's looking, but that never lasts long, because as soon as you describe your observations, your experiences out loud, and especially when you write your genius poems, everybody watches you in awe.

Dream Vacation To The Back Streets

Right now I'd choose to go home. It feels good to just go home. I don't need nothin' special, no resorts, none of that—just goin' home is good enough right now—just to go back to what I know and love is where I wanna be. To the regular outsider, my neighborhood might look like just any other, but you really gotta dig deep to really find somethin' worth your time.

It's a lot of unique characters and places. The backstreets are loaded with people and activities happening all day. But people try to avoid us and our spots and go strictly through the main, mostly occupied streets. But if you take a minute to get to know the people, you wouldn't want to leave.

When we get out, we go back to what we know and enjoy. It has nothin' to do with not wantin' to change or tryin' to do bad. It's like fat kids eating food—you can keep us from them, but whenever we get a chance, we gon' right back. But, yea, if I could get a vacation I would go back to my neighborhood, especially the back streets. It's a shame I'm away from it now, but I'm on the way back.

-Birdman, San Francisco

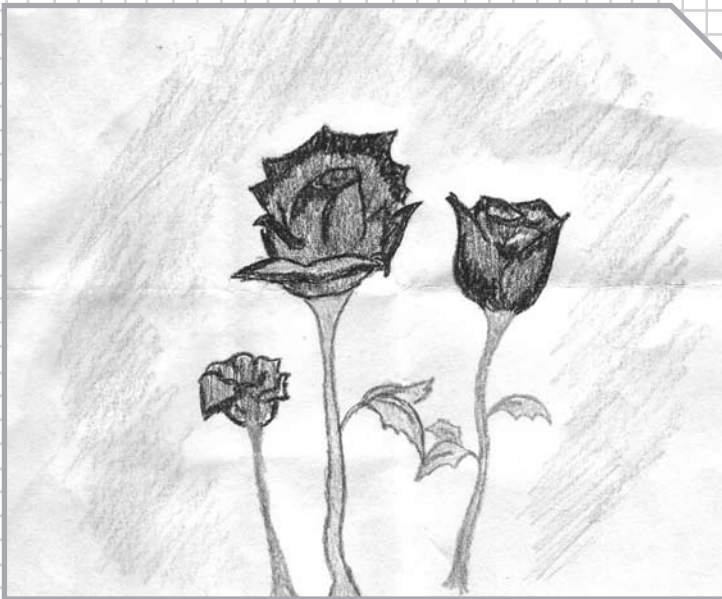
From The Beat: You have chosen your neighborhood over Paris, Jamaica, Nigeria, Costa Rica, Hawaii—many gorgeous places. We can feel how lonely you are for home. But does your neighborhood also sabotage you, your freedom, your plans for your future, by luring back into the streets and demanding you "put in work" for your streets? If so, how are you going to juggle these opposing forces?

Doin' Everything But Right

I could see you by my side
Won't you lead me into the light?
I be dreamin' in the sky
Wishin' for a better night
Like a demon in the sky
Doing everything but right
I could need you in my life
Baby we could make it right
If only you could take my hand
And make it through the fight
Takin' a stand for what you believe in
My granny call it pride
I'm permanent like cement
Departed when it's my time
But until that comes, me and Shorty
We gon' shine,
You know a ninja been grindin'

-H-two-oh-Cal, Alameda

From The Beat: Great poem, as always! You end on grindin', as if that's the answer to what you need. But is grindin' really what your granny meant by pride? Is that her highest hope for the talent and potential you have? No matter who your Shorty is, you know in your heart that it's on YOU to find what you believe in and live up to it. Peace.



Ever-Lasting Dream

Hello Beat! I'm not really feeling any of these topics, so I'm just gonna write about what it would be like living in a dream forever. That would be hella sick living in a dream forever and being able to control it and do anything I want.

I think what I'll do first is brainwash every counselor in juvi and make them think they're monkeys. Ha Ha! I'll probably grow some wings too, so I won't have to walk or drive anywhere. But one thing that's a must is to grow at least eight more inches because I'm only 5'6 and that's pretty short for being a 17-year-old dude. Then I'll make every cop turn into fat ugly pigs with little swirly tails. Ha Ha! What I'll do last is make ghetto places look nice and turn bums into pimps. Well that's all for today, Beat.

Much love to all in the max and all over J-Hall.

-Sad Boy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This piece shows a grand imagination, even though not all the dreamworld activities are exactly appropriate. But, this shows real thinking outside the box. Some people believe they can control their dreams. It's called "Lucid Dreaming." Look it up!

Outside These Walls

At times I catch my mind slipping wondering off in my lil' world, remembering of the freedom I last tasted, but not I'm boxed in with hurt.

One memory, one thought that breaks these barriers between me and my box. She takes my mind off everything with that sexy smile she gots.

I drift off to her laugh that keeps replaying in my head, closing my eyes I can picture us laying down, holding each other in bed.

I visualize her face to break away the only person who makes me feel free, being locked up goes by fast with that one memory that's how it be.

I travel outside these 4 walls with a memory on my shoulders, sitting on my single bed I just wish I could hold her.

But reality checks in and my day dream come to an end, counselor's voice over comes my thoughts saying to me "Selena, your letter didn't send!"

I come to this memory

To make time fly by, till this morning hits and the 6:00 sunrise.

She makes my days turn to weeks and my weeks turn to months, my only salvation of love my sexy tender filled with love.

She's all I have and that's all I need time goes like the wind, sooner or later I'll be leaving.

-Lady Joker, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Lady Joker, you are a true poet(ess). Look at these solid gold lines: "Time goes like the wind", "memory on my shoulders." Keep writing, keep expressing your thoughts, keep turning them to poems that "go like the wind," and you will have another way out of any box you get put into!

RIP

Why did you die, when you didn't even cry?

These pain-filled eyes still searchin' in the skies

The body so low but the soul so high

The image of your face is still reflectin' in my eyes

Now that you're gone, I'm all alone

Talkin' to a slab, instead of callin' on your phone

Reminisce the days we acted a foo'

It's in the past, can't seem to get a clue

Drop some flowers, that's all I can do

And pray to God He's takin' care of you

Keepin' it real throughout the years

What I'd do to have you here

I'd fight the devil, there ain't no fear

Damn, what if you saw me now?

Locked up like a sucka, tryna hold it down

Staff here got me runnin' around

Watchin' ninjas from their sets, jus' doin' their pound

It's a pitiful way to live

Feedin' for your kimchee, pho and baby back ribs

Miss makin' you pay

Orderin' hella shhh

Jus' to see what you say

Never had a plan, and took day by day

You taught me your ways, but I strayed away

Hope you're proud, my ninja, stay happy, please

My homie, my brother, just rest in peace

-Lil' Hedge Hog, San Francisco

From The Beat: You describe really well the pain, sadness, and tenderness you feel when your homie died. You explain things that you feel, that happen to you, because he's still your best friend. How would he talk to you, if he could, about your messing up? What would he tell you about how precious life is?

War Zone

In my block I see a war zone. People fighting each other for no reason at all. I don't know why, but that's the way it's been for the last few years.

I think the fighting needs to stop! Not only are people hurting themselves, but also innocent people as well. And for what? Wearing the wrong colors, over drugs and money.

People's lives are way too valuable to end over some of these reasons or reasons related to these. For someone to die on my block is not really a big deal; as the way it used to be. But people don't see that every life taken is a tragedy because the person gone could have been a lawyer, police officer and maybe even the next president.

All these tragedies need to stop because when someone is gone, they are gone forever-without a second chance. So when you're about to try something that is putting someone's life in danger, think twice...

-Roberto, SEF, Maricopa County

From The Beat: Roberto you express frustration and sadness over the tragedies you have seen and heard about on your block. Where can you begin to make a difference? The solutions lie with those willing to seek them and carry them through. How willing are you to be a part of positive changes? Do you know the story of the starfish? You may be just one person...but possibly there are others who live in your neighborhood who feel the same way you do and want to make a difference. We hope you will speak up when you are released about your concerns and hopes for your neighborhood. We hope you will become a part of a beginning to the end of violence in your neighborhood.



My First Mind

That advice

I knew wasn't right
Setting at that bus stop
Alone and money was
Calling but that person
Just didn't look right
I knew I should've listened to
My first mind.

That advice

About going to hit a lick
It all sounded too good but
Then it looked too easy
But it all happen too fast
Within a blink of an eye
Sometime I wish I should've
Went with my first mind.

That advice

It wasn't right hopefully
They don't give my brother
Life and me nine years 'cause
I'm tired of setting in jail
Now I wish I we should've
Went with our first mind.

-Lil' Shawnee, Alameda

From The Beat: The good news is that your first mind sounds like a smart mind - a sure guide to right and wrong, safe and messed up. Just look how well you summed it up in this terrific poem... you have someone smart looking out for you (yourself). Now you've just got to learn how to listen to her!

That Advice

This your boy Young Goofy here, speakin' about bad advice I took as a youngster and how it affected me growin' up.

When I was hella young, I grew up with my uncles and my primos all into drugs and the gang lifestyle. They used to always take me to go kick it with them and the older homies and let me do drugs and drink with them. They use to tell me it was cool to do that stuff.

When I was like 10, I started getting into trouble with all them. I used to ask them about the lifestyle they live and they kicked me down the habits they had.

My tios (uncles) were always in and out the pen. I would ask them about it and they would tell me that it's their home.

I followed in their footsteps and look where I'm at now. I just got out, now I'm back.

It doesn't just affect me, but it does affect my familia. Every time I see my mom, she always cryin'.

So to all out there, keep your head up. Do your time and stay out. Be careful and really think about the advice you take and what you take it for. Well, I'm out. Be safe. Alratos.

-Young Goofy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is really powerful to recognize those that came before us and how they influenced our life. Do you believe that you must follow in their footsteps or do you think you can break the cycle?

That Wrong Night

How do you think I feel about my
Best "boy" friend getting killed?
Probably the ninjas that did it, did
It for a couple of bills.
Man that shhh ain't real.

They killed a true ninja, a real ninja, a solid ninja
A young football star ninja. They did real damage

When they pulled the trigga. I bet they didn't

Know they hit the wrong ninja. One hit to the

Chest, one hit to the back.

On that cold Sunday night behind the caution tape

Hot and cryin', what you expect me to relax.

I was so hot. I hoped each and every ninja that
Was affiliated got, got. He didn't even have a chance.

To run. From that poison, that poison gun. Bet they
Didn't know he was a beloved fourteen year old son. And

He had a shot to the dome. I think that's what

Really made him go cold. But my best "boy" friend

Sittin' up there on a throne livin wit' God with

White and gold. RIP Jae Miguel Logan

Oakland's Finest 7-25-91-7-2-06

-Jocely, Alameda

From The Beat: Not only do you honor your "boy" friend with this elegant poem, but you also capture the rage and senselessness of it all. How can it be that a beloved human life can be bought for money, or revenge? How can beef be worth tragedy like this? We can ask why, but you manage to turn that "why" into a piece of art we can all share.

*I followed in their footsteps
and look where I'm at now. I
just got out, now I'm back.*

Dream Vacation Is Having Money

My dream vacation is to have a lot of money. What I would do with the money. I will buy my mom a car and buy be another grill and then I will take my brother and me to go clothes shopping and then we go to fancy restaurant to go eat like Red Lobster or Apples Bees.

My other dream vacation is to have the finest girl and be the richest guy in the world and I can buy my family anything they ask for and I can get off of bottles when I want and smoke weed when I want and get any car I want.

-Johnny

From The Beat: To have money would be sweet. What is the legit plan to be so well off that you wouldn't have to worry about a thing? We hope you are not thinking illegally, 'cause in the end you won't enjoy a cent!

That Advice

The only bad advice I ever took is the one that got me in here. One day my so-called friends came and ask me if I wanted to hit a house. I said yes and we went.

I then told my brother to be look out and he said okay and we went into the house and we got a gun, two of them. They was a 45 and a 32 so my friend put it in his pants. Then I went in some room and saw a safe and we took it out and I ran to my house, where I got garbage bags and we put the money in it. It was good until I got caught. That was my bad advice I did something that my friend told me to do, bad advice.

-Johnny

From The Beat: Super bad advice. You're lucky to be alive. When are you going to stand on your own two feet and not follow others? Don't pull your brother into this drama!

Memory Lane

All there is to think about in jail is memories with family and friends and chilling with the fam, because they're sending me away to camp for one-year so it's going to be a lot of tears shedding and smiles.

All I can remember is my old girl friend's smile and how she use to hug me and it felt like she would never let go. I love her to death and that's it.

-D'sean

From The Beat: Oh the miss of a touch from someone you love. We understand. Hope you get a hug soon! Now do your program so you can return home.

That Advice, That Hit

I think that the worst advice I ever took was when I was like ten and this older boy I hung out with told me to "hit this lil' bra."

He was like 15 and he had a blunt in his hand. I took it and I hit it a few times and it felt hella good. I got a little light headed but it was all good

I think that's only reason I listened to him 'cause I wanted to be liked, having no father figure to tell me right from wrong. That decision screwed my whole life up 'cause from that first hit at 10 years old it never stopped. Grandma and auntie beggin' me to stop but a women can't rise a man so they pleads never really got to me.

Now I can't wait to get out and to get off probation and burn an eighth.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: Yeah, smoking weed will scrw you up and you recognize it. Now you have no desire to stop? Why? You deserve so much more than this incarceration life! In the name of your auntie and grandma put the weed down and get busy with living a healthy life!

My house and family

What's up The Beat! I am not going to talk about topics from today because I don't know what to write about. Sorry about that.

Today I am going to talk about my house and my family and how much I miss them.

I wish I could change the things I did to not come to jail, hopefully when I go to court tomorrow the judge will decide if I am going home or to a group home. I wish the judge will let me go home and give me a chance to be with my family.

I been here a month and almost two weeks now, so I hope the judge will let me go home. I want to see my brother and grandparents especially, because I haven't seen them a lot. I hope God will give me chance to go home tomorrow and let me be with my family.

Thanks for coming I might not see you next week but it was great to meet you David. Thank you for letting us expressed our feelings.

-Marco

From The Beat: You are more than welcome. We hope the best for you in your travels as you work towards bettering yourself and staying out of juvenile and off probation!



My Hard Advice

My advice to whoever is reading this is that if your getting released home on EM, Home Sup., or probation, take advantage of it. No matter how hard or tired you get of it, do it anyways, because you're gonna wish you did in the future when you sitting in a group home or back in jail. The more you wish you could go back in time to make a better decision because you keep doing wrong, only it can get worse, so take my advice if you want or you can find out the hard way like I did....

I wished I would have listen to that advice I got a couple years ago when I was home on EM. I was told not to cut it off and to do the thirty days I was given. But I was young, and didn't care or listen, like all kids. I wished I would have listened, I wouldn't be in jail now or facing this time I have to do in placement.

I always wonder what would have happened if I would have just took that advice to do right in life where would I be now!!

-Convict

From The Beat: That's right, one way or another one will get how important it is to do your program if you truly want off of probation. Appreciate the example to that validates why we need to handle our business. We are always impressed with your contributions and your realness.

Thinking Outside The Box When It Comes To Food

The way I was thinking outside the box is about how the food is not real tasting and filling. Every time I eat a meal, it's not filling. For example, for breakfast, these pancakes and waffles taste fake. Lunch: all the things we have taste different than the things on the outs. Every time we get done eating, there's a space that isn't filled.

I think after every meal how bad I want some McDonald's. The pancakes tastes so much better. There's no explaining the way it taste. And KFC. I can't wait till I get out, -I'm going to eat KFC first. If I get by McDonald's first, then I'm eating that first. That how I was thinking outside the box.

-Eli

From The Beat: The line in your piece that really grabbed us was this: "Every time we get done eating, there's a space that isn't filled." Food and feelings and a sense of comfort and security are all wrapped up with one another. When you are locked up, it is hard to feel whole in so many ways. Hopefully, you will remember this empty feeling when you're back on the outs. Remember how it made you sad. And make a promise to yourself to avoid getting locked up in an institution ever again!

My Brazilian Dream Vacation

My dream vacation is to go to Brazil with my girlfriend and just spend money and swim in the cool waters. Lay on the sand. Me and my girlfriend just doing whatever. I just want to lay on the beach with coconut trees around and me and my girlfriend. Drinking raw coconuts off the tree. We would just be chillin, having fun and relaxed.

- Lil' Zale

From The Beat: Sounds like a great vacation! What got you interested in Brazil? This editor hasn't been there, but it's supposed to have beautiful beaches.

Dream Vacation In The Bahamas

My dream vacation would be to go to the Bahamas and take one girl with me and a pound of grapes and just smoke all of my pains away and not worry about getting shot at or going to jail because if I was out there I wouldn't be getting into trouble.

I could see it now, me and my chick laying on the beach, and she not going to have nothing on but a bikini suit and we would be staying in a condo. I would just be relaxing with peace on my mind and I would have to get me a whole new wardrobe.

-Butta

From The Beat: Even if the Bahamas trip has to remain a daydream for now, what are some other things you can do to find the peace you are craving? Is there a place you can go around here where you can avoid the shooting and the temptation to do dirt? What do you do to relax that isn't illegal?

My Advice

Save your family. Save your hood from making it look bad. Just sav-it-out and sit down. Do your time, it's gonna make you stronger. If it breaks you, then you weren't made for "the life."

- Keepin' It Real

From The Beat: When we look at "the life," we see more of a death: not just the young gang bangers on both sides, but also their families: kids losing their fathers, mothers, big brothers.... Inhumane treatment in overcrowded lockdown facilities, where all you have to connect you to your loved ones is kites that the guards get to read first. And the worst is that it's all over spots, blocks and territories that none of you will ever have a chance of owning unless you get out of this so-called life and into a position of real power.

Boosie in Camp

This is Lil' Nario, I'm in camp doing good right now. I want to go home because it's boosie up in here. I'm just saying do good and you will be out.

-Nario

From The Beat: OK Nario, we feel you on getting out. But the challenge is to STAY out. Tell us how you are going to do that?

Thinking Out The Box...

I think about my girlfriend. She's almost six months pregnant with my child. I think about her and of the times we used to spend together. I also think of how I'm messing up badly by being in here. I'm not giving her the support she needs and I'm not starting out well as a father. I think about giving my child all the guidance and opportunities in life that I didn't have.

Also I want to be there for my child because I don't want my kid to grow up mixed up and not having a male role model father figure as I did.

-Joseph

From The Beat: First of all, let yourself feel sad about not being with her right now. Your regrets are real, and they are important because they will guide you in the future. To be the father you want to be, you will have to make disciplined choices every single day of your life. No one said it would be easy...but it's worth it. Remember, it's not about giving your kid every thing, it's about being there. Once you have made this commitment and are at peace with it, then comes the fun part: you get to meet your new baby!

Thinking

I'm thinking 'bout what I'm going to do when I get out. I'm thinking about if me and my girlfriend going to still be together when I'm out. I'm thinking about when am I going to stop getting in trouble and start doing the right thing. I tired of thinking about it. I'm when is I'm going to do it.

-Uncle Fester

From The Beat: Sometimes there is a thing as "too much time on your hands". Jail is one of those times. Probably the most productive kind of thinking you can do right now is to make specific plans for yourself. "Doing the right thing" is pretty open-ended. What exactly can you do to avoid getting locked up again, and to make peace with your lady and your family?

Thinkin Outside My Cell

There are times when I think outside my cell. Being locked up in yo' cell can cause stress and make you think a lot of things. Sometime people think of killing the'self 'cause he or she thinks it will help them get out faster. Not me, I think about life on the outs, and my kid and my mom, that what keep me from going crazy and having stupid thoughts.

Something else is to not trip, cause if you did the crime you should not be mad. You should be mad at yo 'self. Out to next time!!!!

-Doo Sham

From The Beat: Good advice! It seems like you have done a lot of soul-searching while you have been at 150. We will miss you in the writing workshops! Best of luck as you take steps towards being a great dad and living in freedom.

My Dream Vacation

For my dream vacation, I would be goin somewhere hella far. Somewhere where it's hot and there's a beach with hella beautiful women and exotic drinks and stuff like that.

-B

From The Beat: Sounds like fun!

Thinkin' Outside The Box = Freedom

The way I think outside the box is my freedom. The way I like the outs. I like being out kicking it wit' the homies, kicking with females instead of coming in and out of jail seeing the same staff and same inmates. Wanna see my family instead of seeing them in here. Wanna be out on the turf. Staying with the homies and kicking it with my lady.

Stressing here thinking about my lady if she messing around wit other dudes, feel me? And I gotta worry about my dad. Thinking about pops knowing he could pass away any day. I gotta be there for him. Thinking about pops. Love you Dad.

-Pedro

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear your dad's health isn't good. You know, none of us can stay a kid forever. At some point, we all have to grow up and quit hanging out on the block with our friends. There is more to life than coming in and out of jail all the time. You need to change your ways now or you are going to have regrets.

Givin' You the Game

Givin' you the game 'cause you obviously ain't gettin' it
I'm giving it to you for free and there's nothing you can
do

to stop it.

I'm giving you some game, letting you know you
shouldn't hate

Take heed to the game I'm giving you
'cause I personally think it's great.

I'm giving you the game telling that you shouldn't lie.

If you wanna make yourself look good
then put on a dress or suit and tie

I'm going to give you the game to let you know you
shouldn't

Try to be what you're not.

You should love yourself

appreciate life and everything and be you.

Do you stay true yourself.

You're Beautiful

-NuNu The System Victim

From The Beat: Another triumphant poem, NuNu. Your poems are also full of confidence and power. We hope that you sing those last three lines to yourself, too, because that way you can lead by example.

Do-over

I wish I could go back to the day my boy got shot in the head. All I could think of was my ninja that killed my ninja Mezzy R.I.P Mezzy I wish you the Best up there in haven.

-Baby Gurl

From The Beat: We would be honored to print a longer piece - by you - about what made him special, and what he was like, to carry on his memory. Step up and write one!

Random Memories

The one thing that makes me think outside the box is just a random memory that comes to my mind. My mind travels to my family, being out there with them and doing everything I've never done with them before, or going somewhere "out-of -the-way" with my girl and my child and spend special quality time together, no fussing or fighting. I think about my family and my loved ones when I'm in jail (camp).

-Dougie

From The Beat: It's good to know you have these memories of your loved ones and family to keep you warm when camp gets cold. We didn't know you were also a father! Congratulations! Has your attitude towards life changed since you had a child of your own to think about?

Thinkin Outside The Box

I just think about seeing my friends when I get out and how I will be getting to eat what I want and be able to go out and do a lot more things when I would like to do them. Go to a regular school, sleep in my own bed, as well as see my family.

-Chris

From The Beat: It will feel so good. Do you worry about behaviors or habits in your life that might cause you to get in trouble again? In addition to enjoying your freedom, what can you do on the outs to avoid coming back to the Hall?

Thinkin Outside The Box...

So yeah, I be thinking outside the box because my girl pregnant, you feel me, and that be having me thinking because she's three months already and I'm trying to get up out of here, so I could be with her. I'm trying to be there when my baby is born, and I don't know if is going to happen because I'm going to Camp Sweeney. It just be having me kind of stressing. But I'm gonna just do my time and just get it over with.

-Boom

From The Beat: The situation you are in is stressful and sad. It's ok that you feel that way right now. But it's not the end of the road for you! When you get done doing your time, you are going to have a huge and exciting new opportunity. Your young son or daughter is going to look up to you and be your new little buddy. Maybe you can turn the frustration of being locked up right now into a hopeful time by planning things you can do to be a good dad. Like getting a job, going back to school, things you want to teach him or her. Your baby's birth might be a kind of re-birth for you, too. Do you agree? But remember, you have to stay on point at Camp.

Eric Jerome Dickey

What makes me think outside the box (well camp really) is me reading books, going to school and not thinking about when I'm going to get released, making something out of nothing.

In camp I do stuff I don't normally do on the outs, like play games, read books and just do my time without thinking about it. I like to read Eric Jerome Dickey books because they are about women and how they think I could relate to them.

-Lonnie

From The Beat: Which are your favorite EJD books? How many have you read? Did you know he has a website where he makes a list of his own favorite books (two writers he loves are Ed McBain and Elmore Leonard). Also - he has a house in Barbados (which just shows, a person CAN make a good living as a writer)

My Thoughts Turned Inside Out

Struggling through hard times I ain't never had.

Growing up a kid my parents couldn't spell rich.

Everything changed when I started banging my street
for the good and the bad ones as you can see.

My Mama didn't want me to bang, she is always crying.
She thinks I am going to get hit when them hollow tips
start flying.

Mama don't cry. Now I'm in Camp Sweeney trying not to
escape.

This is not a rap, no high-power faker.

This my thoughts laid out on paper.

I want to get out but it's no more wishing.

These one-hundred-twenty-five days I'm just gonna pimp
it.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: We can tell this is your real thoughts by the way they hit you from the page, deadly and accurate like bullets. How about a follow up poem, where you tell us what comes next? These 125 days aren't the hard part - the hard part is what comes after. What's your plan?

Day Dream

When I am in my room I daydream about my boyfriend, that just got out of here. I miss him so much, I wish I could talk, to tell him not to talk to no one. I wish I could see him. I wish all these people would stop thinking about all these girls and boys up here.

-Jacqueline

From The Beat: By now the pangs of missing your boyfriend are probably not so bad. Which is good, because the most important thing to focus on is yourself: school, reading, studying, and getting prepared for your next stop in life!

Dream Vacation

My dream vacation will be to Brazil because the have nice looking ladies. I've seen a lot of Brazilian women in videos and they are so beautiful. I can't wait to take a trip to Brazil.

-Young Money

From The Beat: Here's your first sentence in Portuguese: Hola, usted es hermosa. ¿Puedo tomarla que baila? (That means "Hello, you are beautiful, may I take you out dancing?")

The People In My Life

What's up Beat? This is Lil' J, writing and feeling pretty sad. I'm sad because my mother is sick and I can't go home to see her. Also I'm sad because my girlfriend is mad at me, and I don't want her to be unhappy.

That's why I've got to do my program, so I can be with my mom, my sister, and my girl, Vanessa. They are what I live for, because without them I couldn't do anything. I hope they forgive me for getting locked up.

Love to the three people in my life: Noelia, Karina, and Vanessa.

-Lil' J

From The Beat: We could tell this piece came straight from the heart, and we sure hope your mom gets better soon. Even more we hope that when you get out you stay with these three women you care about so much! Good luck!

Parents - Cool or Uncool?

There is one thing they have in common, "They are annoying." But no matter what, they are here to steer you in the right direction. Life is hard, and in life you made a lot of choices. Parents are there to help you make it.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: We may never understand how hard it is to be a parent until we have children of our own. Do you usually listen to what your parents tell you to do? Would you say you have a good relationship with them?

Back Again! Yeah

Hey Beat what it do? This is your girl, Baby Gurl. I know it's been 3 months since you last seen me, and when I get I out you know I can't stay out of Juvy!. I must like it here!

They trying to send me all the way out on the east coast to the group home, but I just don't want to go out there they want me to do one year. I guess I'm just going to go and do that time out on the east coast. I just came back from Boston doing time out there in juvenile hall for a week. My baby daddy was just up in here and got out of here.

-Baby Gurl

From the Beat: We love seeing you, Baby Gurl, but we sure wish we didn't have to see you in county pink! What do you think, is there something about life out there that is hard to handle, which makes you want to come back to a place you know? Or is it just that there are old habits you can't break? Break it down for us!

Doing Right

I know when get out of jail I am going to be good and do my group home program so that I can go home to my big loving family. I want to make them proud of me so much that I am just going to do right. When I get out of jail.

-Lil' Re-Re

From The Beat: We're sure your family would be proud to read these words from you ... making the promise to yourself is half the job. But as for the second half, tell us a little more about your plan for "doing right."

Reflection

What up with it Beat, this is Lil' Capy writing you from camp. I'm writing about how I'm trying to get up out of here. This is all hell a weak, but it's cool. I'll be in the on the weekends, with the homies on the block, kickin' with my real family, my hood family!

Well I'm trying to finish this program, so I can get off probation, seal my case and get a job. Then. To all from Oakland, do your time so you can be in the out. Well I'm out Beat late.

-Lil' Cap

From The Beat: If your hood family is what you look forward to, then you have a problem... because the activities you do with your hood family are what get you to jail... You are already thinking positive by planning to get a job, but how are you going to keep that job, if you're still picturing yourself on the block?

Advice: Be Cool

This advice my Brah told me was to stop all that hot ass stuff and be cool. Just kick back, grind on the block and after some time watch how the money starts coming in.

Never forget about keeping that thing on you, and be ready to get active on the real 'cause you can lose your life real fast.

-Lil' Kari

From The Beat: We know that you think there's a "safe" way to be on the streets—and 'keep that thing on you', but we've seen too many funerals and gotten too many letters from the adult facility to believe it anymore. There are other ways of making money besides grinding – legit ways, but you need to have the imagination and courage to look PAST the block... and out into the larger world of the city, which has so many opportunities for you.

Dream Vacation In Miami

My dream vacation is to go back to Miami and go to the richest resort in Miami livin' in a suite and enjoy in my self. And I would bring my whole family so that my whole family could have a good time to with their little girl.

-Lil' Re-Re

From The Beat: It says a lot about your heart and ability to care for people that when you make your wish you include the idea of sharing it with your loved ones. What kinds of "family activities" would you do in Miami?

Thug Mansion

What's up Beat, this your boy Ruddy from the town, writing about when I think outside the box. I be in my room thinking about all my dead homies, I be thinking about kickin' it together, smoking and drinking in a thug's mansion with all my homies. That's what I be thinkin'. One day I will be with my dead homies in thug mansion. RIP to my homies

-Ruddy

From The Beat: Between now and the mystery of the afterlife, you have your actual physical life here to think about – and if you plan it right, a life full of love and good things. Do you ever imagine what you want out of this life, here on earth?

I Want My Freedom!

What up Beat? This Lil' Tonio, still holdin' it down. My topic today is thinkin' outside the box, and that ain't cool. 'Cause thinkin' out the box is why I stress so much. The worst part of it is that I can't help it cause I got so many sweet memories, and I can't help but think of being treated like I ain't shhh, with no rights.

My mind always tends to travel to some female's bed and that's the most stressful stuff in the world, when all you can do is fantasize, and can't blast nothin'.

When I'm on the phone that makes my mind travel but it's more of a reliever than a stress factor. Letters do too, and so does a mind trappin' book.

But ain't nothin' like memories that come floating through my dome and if y'all would see why this situation is so difficult for Da Kid! The only thing that takes my mind off being where I am at is when I'm asleep. I can't wait till I cut! Free Da kid!

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: The Beat will never forget the day you showed up in the old Hall, thinking you might have to take thirty years. "Da Kid" looked like "Da Demon", face set in rage, eyes bugging out. And now, just look how much things have changed. Your sentence has been whittled away to a shadow, you've become a leader, you have a plan, respect, maturity, and hope. Da Kid's mind is already half free! Are you going to take it all the way there?

Outside The Box

I'm always thinking about family and how fun we have when were all together, and thinking about how life would be if I had no one to turn too or no one to look up to. Now I look up to my brother, he almost done with college and going to graduate majoring in "criminal justice."

I know for a fact that I'll be done with high school in December and I start junior college in January. I'm very family oriented and I will always be.

When I get home I'm going straight to my sisters house for my BBQ and having a welcome back party.

-Tasha

From The Beat: Good luck, it sounds like you have real positivity I your family to lean on as you get yourself back on track in the outside world. Keep us posted on how it goes!

Let Me Introduce You

Lookin' at a vision that I can't even see
Sorrow, madness, mayhem, disturbing mentalities

Stuck in a puzzle
Trapped in a maze

Lookin' at yo' reflection trapped in the cage
Hearing darkness lurking seeing you fears
Night mares and deception is cloudin' my ears
Thinkin' about love but I'm realizin' it's fake

There's only one person to turn to know

Let me introduce you to hate

Try to stand tall, but the only people hate ain't took fall

You start to slip and slowly drip down that wall

Tryna find yo' most important item but it's already lost

You would do anything to get it back, pay all cost

Act happy for the public but inside it's forever burning
sad

Don't try to look for this lost soul

'Cause it's already left in the past.

-Dell

From The Beat: That last couplet would be heartbreaking except for this: There's no way that a lost soul could ever write a poem filled with so much soul! That's the incredible thing about art in general and this wonderful piece in particular - it doesn't hide from pain. But by facing the pain, the artist makes it easier to bear, for himself, and for the people who receive the gift of his art.

That Advice

That advice when other people gave me wrong.

That advice when I should left them people along.

That advice that I should stay in school and not be no fool

That advice that I should listen to my mother and stay in school

That advice that she had give me went straight through my hand Now I am sitting and jail saying to myself that I should never sold them drugs to that man.

Man that advice I should just listen, I should just listen to my mother and just sit in the kitchen man

That advice that I was given, man I should just listen.

-Lolita

From The Beat: That advice you didn't follow/That advice you'll remember tomorrow/You have a chance to do it right next time/Like you told yourself in this rhyme!

Thinkin' Outside The Cell

I wish to be free and have a good life with my mom and dad, and get a job, and have a baby by my wifey, Diamond. Stop being in jail in Alameda County Juvenile Hall or San Francisco Juvenile Hall.

-Raymond

From The Beat: Who can help you with your job search? Ask your PO! Make him or her hook you up with some good resources! That's part of their job. It may take awhile to earn the trust of your parents and girlfriend again, so maybe just take things slow at home.

Cambodia

My dream vacation is to go to Cambodia, because I want to do new things and meet new people. The reason why I want to go to Cambodia is because I think it would be a lot of fun. I'll meet new people, try new things, see new things, and go to new places. I like going on vacation because it give you a chance to try new things.

-Malika

From The Beat: And the thing about Cambodia is that getting there is expensive, but once your there food and hotels are so much cheaper than here! We hope you get your chance to travel, not just to Cambodia but also to see the rest of the world as well! You deserve true adventure!

Back Again

In mid-May 2007, I, Isaac, had gotten released. I went straight out to my BM's house, and she cooked for me.

You know when you got a girl like I do you can get anything, but I still got respect for her no doubt. But ya I got caught and caught another case - a robbery case at that. They givin' me 10 to 25 years.

-Lil' Black

From The Beat: Man, we're sorry to hear this. But we're also hoping that by the time this piece gets printed, it will turn out that those big numbers got reduced. Be sure to write a follow-up to let us know how it turned out, and our thoughts are with you!

Brazil

My dream vacation is to go to Brazil. I always wanted to go there because all you do is party all day long and it's so live there and the people are very nice to you than the people out here. It's less to stay out there, but I don't think that I would want to live there because I would want to come home some time soon.

-Miracle

From The Beat: So far Brazil seems to be the BW writers' top choice for vacation trips. We learned from another writer that in the summer time, during fiesta, there are parties on the street every day but Wednesday! Have you already been there?

A Brother From Another Mother?

What's up Beat, this ya boy BJ, comin' straight from Richmond.

And I wanna tell you about me and my brother from another mother, his name is Ab. Me and Ab been knowin' each other since we was knee high. We born in the same 'hood. We did a lot of things together.

Man I remember once - I was on a pill one time and I was ready to kill somebody, and he was the only one that calmed me down.

-Bj

From The Beat: You and your boy should check out the book *The Pact*, and see if you can follow that example to lift each other up! Check it out, and tell us what you think.

Man...

Man I'm back in this hall eatin' this food
Back in a cell, doin' this school,
Every day that goes by I get madder and madder,
Tryin' to escape, go to the room,
Now I'm gon' insane.
Tryin' to escape day by day
I come to the hall tryin to make a call,
But staff won't let me...
Man that's all

-Porkey

From The Beat: Keep your head up Porkey! Is there a way you can use your time this second stint to really look within and try to figure out how you got caught up again? What was the first step? Was it running?

Sometimes it's Good

As I think outside the box, I stumble across a question
I wonder why I did
Why I've never had a life like a lil' kid
I grow up too "quick".

Now I wonder why people like family tell me so many lies
Sometimes the best thing for me to do is just to cry
I miss my family I miss my girlfriend and my BG Alire.

I miss a lot sometimes it's good to think outside the "box"

-Souja Gurl

From The Beat: This shows such wisdom and insight... because you saw right away that the big box is really mental, not physical. And you're right - where did your childhood go, and why did you have to grow up too fast? It's good to think outside that box because it helps you really become conscious of your place in this world (at the top, lady, at the top!), and that can help you become more in control of your actions in the future

Back in Here

What's up Beat, it's Lil Porkey back in Juvenile Hall. Well this is only my second time in the Hall. This is stuff that happened my first time: I came for a 2-11 robbery and was only here for fifty-four days, then Judge Kate released me on EM. I go out for one month and one week, than failed.

I was supposed to turn myself in. But when I was on the run I robbed some guy. Two days later I got caught eating Chinese food with my cousin. They came in with guns to my head and that's it. So now I been in here for three weeks.

Well that's it.

-Porkey

From The Beat: Back up, back up, what went on for those five weeks that got you on the run? That sounds like a seriously good Beat piece, break it down for our pages!

Free Write

Things get crazy sometimes when you are locked up, not just you as a person but almost your whole family. The only person that is really holding it down is your sister. She's younger than you and really is not that much street smart, to hold it down for the family.

So when you in the jail cell, you think about going bad everyday, but the only thing that's stopping you is God. He's telling you it's going to be alright, but you have know deep down in your heart, you have to put up a fight. Not just for you but your whole family.

-Meech Boy

From The Beat: You put the "free" back in free write, because you really did write your way into the strength that can help you put up that fight. You've got your sister, your family, your faith, things that keep you strong. What else can you add to that list to help you rise up?

Relax and Relax

What's up Beat? This ya boy Shady Bo out of Juvenile Hall, and I'm gonna tell you where and why I think outside of the box. When I think outside the box my mind wanders to a different place, where I could sit back and "relax and relax" and give myself some space.

Notice I said "relax and relax." That's a double quote. One, I relax my body and relieve all tension from my mind. Then I relax the scenery in my mind, so my mind could wander.

Then I travel to the future and talk to my self and ask questions all the time, like why did you do that in the past and how did you become so successful?

Then I'll laugh to myself and say "Only you can take responsibility for your own action, boy."

Then I think to myself, "Why keep coming here when I could get a job and go to college?" Then I think that's what I'm going to continue to do when I hit the outs.

-Shady Bo

From The Beat: Congratulations! This is the same kind of "positive thinking" that monks from almost every religion have used to get themselves into a clear mindset. Do you have a fixed time of day you do it? Is this a routine you plan on continuing when you get out?

Piece of My Mind

What it do?

Check me out what's really

I keep livin' in a dream where ya boy got silly
I coulda been drunk but instead I popped me a pill
But reality strikes and I ain't free like Willy
I'm stuck like chuck kinda fresh outta luck
Ya boy needs a girl plus I wanna get ____

Wishin' on a star, if you know what I mean
Sometimes I zone out but it's not what it seems

I keep my mind motivated, infatuated by green
I fell in love with da grapes plus I'm loving da heen

Patron plus that good-good Remy
When there's fully automatics ain't no need for a semi
Ya dig or catch slugs to Ya wig

I do it nacho bell grande aka do it big
My last line sick I got it straight from a mack
Lomack that be "Take a Nap and call me back!"

-Gumby

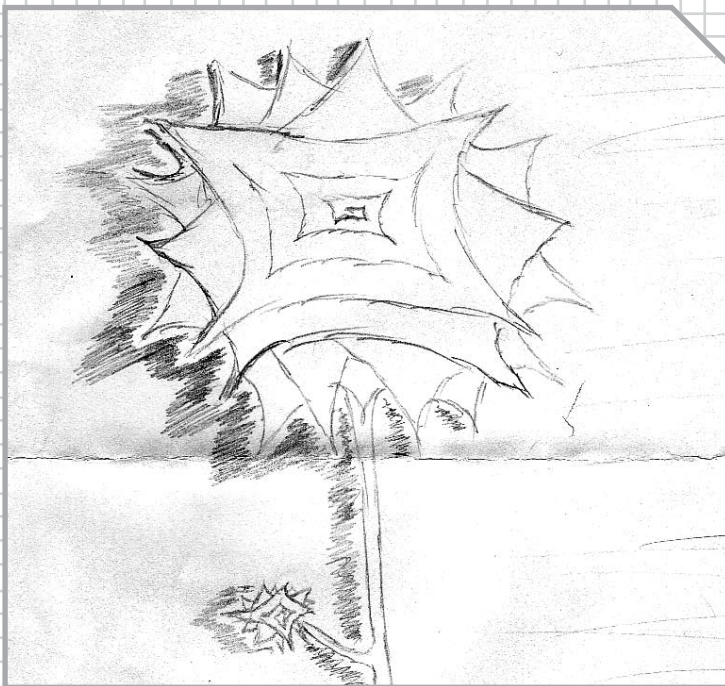
From The Beat: When you focus your energy on small time rhymes about guns and liquor (the two products that get sold on every ghetto street corner, how about that), it's like you're using all your talent and genius to shine and sparkle the chains on your wrists and your neck. To you they may look like bling, to us they look like slave-chains. You're too good for this. When are you going to break free? (And if you think we're full of it, write a poem about that. We respect you and we're ready to hear you out if you disagree)

Here Goes My Dream Vacation

It's yo' homie Indio from the 'Town once again. I just wanted to write about this dream vacation. Well here it goes. My dream vacation I have is some place where all my family and homies who are dead and not dead all in this big ass paradise spot where there's nothing to worry about, just kickin' it all peacefully (maybe this is heaven I'm thinking of) drinking hella much, getting' on hella hard with hella beezies. Man. RIP to my homies, I'm out.

-Indio

From The Beat: The key word in this "dream vacation" is "peacefully." Imagine what it would be like if you didn't always have to watch your back, if there wasn't the fear that another person might get shot, if you didn't always have to drink just to knock the pain away (yeah, you say it's to have fun, but we think there's more to it.) You deserve that, you know: A peaceful life. Not just in the next world. In this one.



Our Wrongdoings

Bring here makes everybody think, obviously.

Thinking about the outside world of cause.

Our family, friends, stress, school, sometimes education,

And what we could be, if we were not here.

Thinking about the people we left behind to be in here

Not because we wanted to, but because it's like the

Debt we have to pay, for our wrongdoings.

-Tee Lee Bay Bay

From The Beat: Does being here also give you ideas for how to think about your future, and what you'd like to do with your life once you're out...to be happy?

Family On My Mind

I would go see my girlfriend, my little sister, my mom, and my cousin's. What takes my mind off of jail is thinking about what my friends are going to say about me and jail. And what my little sister is doing and if my mom is okay at home. And what are my cousins thinking about me and jail.

-Larry

From The Beat: What do you think they will say about you being in jail? If you truly care about the people you mentioned you will take steps to improve your young life and make them all proud.

I Rap

When I wanna escape the fact that I'm in jail, I rap. Rap, rap, rap. It makes me feel like I'm in a whole other world. Especially when you raw. I be feelin' high when I write. Then I just imagine what it's gon' be like when I blow up.

All the things I want to do, all the places I want to go, and all the bottles I'm a pop. Oh yeah, and all the girls!

But then I awake when them lights go off, or when stupid ass ninjas start bangin' on the doors.

-Da Boi

From The Beat: You're lucky, because you've already connected with the side of you that is an artist, that stays free no matter what... this is a part of you no one, no system, no ruling, no judge, can ever touch. Keep focused on growing that artist, and it will strengthen you to face all the stress behind these walls, and beyond.

Please Believe It

Compassionate for you to be with me and I hope that you see it.

Someone to hold on to for a while, please believe it.

My love may be anonymous to you but to me it's deceiving

Retrieving my life goals

Including you - I won't leave it.

-H-two-oh-Cal

From The Beat: This short economical little poem might just end up being the most ripped-off love letter in The Beat! Just think of all the relationships you might be saving with your talent!

Every Day

Every day, every second of every minute of the day, I think of my family. I wonder how they're doing, and if they miss me.

-Kevin

From The Beat: They miss you we're sure, but what will be different when you return home?

Miami

My dream vacation is going to Miami because they have clean waters. It's always hot out there. I also want to go out there because my auntie lives out there on my dad's side of the family and I never been out there. My dad always tell me it is a lot of fun.

I was supposed to go out there last summer, but I got in trouble and stuff and I got put on punishment. If I go out there this summer I'm going to hang out with my family. I will go and have fun.

-Charles

From The Beat: Get it together Charles, 'cause opportunities like this don't last forever, even with family.

Dream Vacation Upon Graduation

My dream vacation would be to go on a cruise to Hawaii and spend a week there with my family and my lady.

I wish this would happen the day I graduate high school. I would go kick back on the beach and enjoy myself. I would eat some juicy steak and some lobster. Then fall asleep to the sounds of the ocean and wake up to the sound of birds chirping and look out the window to see the sun rising above the ocean and blue skies. This would be the best time of my life and I'm going to try my hardest to make this dream come true.

-Convict

From The Beat: If you graduate from high school in the free world we would love to help you make this dream possible!! We couldn't help your family get there, but we'd like to help you get to Hawaii!

Sure

By the shore, it's a beach house
Jungle trees around, call it a tree house
Fun is all it be 'bout
When the models be out
And the bottles be out
When the music is loud
And the hawks go wild
All happy, all smiles
Boxes of swisher, and Black and Milds
And this girls is...
Boom boom boom boom boom
"Orlando, wake up
D just got shot"
It's just a dream vacation
These streets is real

-Jungle Boy

From The Beat: Don't give up your dream vacation even though you're struggling with reality. There are ways to move your life forward and upward so that this vacation dream can be achieved.

My Big Bahamas Vacation

My dream vacation is really big
In the Bahamas, jet skis, hella tricks
Hella ninjas wit' hella gigs
No acting hard, 'cause we is
Big ballers with big chips
Hella liquor; we drink quicker
This vacation getting bigger
All parties, no pulling triggers

-Jungle Boy

From The Beat: We think it's strange that you picked an ocean destination but don't mention swimming or snorkeling or any other water activity except jet skis. After all, you can get drunk right here at home!

Out

When I am outside the box, I think about my family and friends. Also, I think about my safety and the people around me, too. I am very aware about everything I do, but sometimes I think about the mistakes, and hopefully I won't do that again.

-Xavier

From The Beat: What do you mean "hopefully" you won't keep making the mistakes that brought you here? If you do make those mistakes again, you can be sure that you'll be seeing more of this place, or worse.

Shh, Be Quiet!

What's up with da Beat. Today? I wanna write about young dudes dat talk too much. I'm tired of people talking 'bout, "Watch, when I get out, I'ma clap you, I'ma beat yo' ass." Dudes be in JJC like they hard as heck, but will freeze up when they staring at the nose of da tech. Ninjas illiterate and can't even read, but they wanna beef. So I'ma have to feed 'em.

People be in here talking hecka stuff, don't even know who around and hearin' everything you saying. One time dis guy was in here talking 'bout, "I shot yo' homie. I'm da one who hit 'im in da face." But it's peanuts and dude think he illey but he soft as cotton battin' the braids.

But I ain't letting it affect me 'cause I'm in here tryna complete my program. They 'bout to send me. I gotta get my head straight. Stay up.

-Tommy Gun

From The Beat: We'd be happier if you wrote about yourself than about everyone else. What are your strengths? Weaknesses? Your plan to get out and stay out of here?

I Love The Block But Tha Block Don't Love Me!

What's up Beat? Dis yo boy Yung Na-Na, but yeah, I want to talk about me lovin' tha block. Yeah I love da block an' I know da block don't love me. That block don't do nothin' for me but get me in trouble. Dat's why I'm here now, because of da block I can't help it, I'm a block boy. I'm out beat!

-Yung Na-Na

From The Beat: So we guess what you're saying that even though the block is the cause of your trouble, you're going right back to it? Hmmm. What are we missing?

I Thank God

When I'm stuck in my cell at night, I read the Bible. When I read the Bible, I tell God, "Thank you for giving me another day." It gives me hope that I can get another chance in life. And when my mom comes and sees me, I thank God for my mom coming to visit me, because I ask Him every day if my mom can come visit me I will be thankful. And when my mom comes, I tell God, "Thanks for listening to me."

I thank God for giving me food and I ask Him sometimes that, "If you give me another chance to let me be free, I will start doing good things in the street, by going to church and going to school every day, and get my grades up." I can be in the team sports. "Thank you, God, for another day in life."

-German

From The Beat: When you bargain with God, promising to change some things in your life if He gives you another chance, isn't that just another way of telling God that you don't plan to change anything if he doesn't answer your prayer first? Don't you think the way to be on God's good side is to do what you know is expected — the right thing to do — without waiting for anything else to happen first? Should God grant your prayers before you make those positive changes, or should the changes come first?

Back To Innocence

Sometimes I wish I can start over from the beginning where I was a kid and there were no problems. Now I understand why people say go to school, do this, and do that. Sometimes I wish I would have done that, but now I have already done that, but that is not that, the that that I don't regret. I did the that that I regret and I wish that I could have done the that that I could take back, but that is over now and I have to do that, the that that is right.

-Cito

From The Beat: That's a few too many "that's" for us to decipher. It's never too late to think about the things people you love were trying to tell you then, and apply them to your life now. And that's that.

Thinkin' Outside The Box

When I'm in my room, I think about my family. My family is my mom and brother, who is six. My lil' brother doesn't know I'm in here, because my mom won't tell 'im. Every time he asks my mom, and she just says, "He's coming home really soon." When my mom comes to visit me, she tells me how bored he is when I'm not around. Hopefully, the 9th of October, I will be home by his side to stay forever. When I'm with my lil' bra, we play video games, watch TV, go out, get something to eat, and relax. I'm out of here, so wish me luck on the 9th.

-Candy Man

From The Beat: Yes, we sure hope that when you get back with your little brother, you are able to stay with him and not hand your freedom over to a bunch of strangers. Here's a little advice to make that more likely: Whatever you do, ask yourself if you'd also like your little brother to do it, too. If the answer is no, then don't do it!

Dream Vacation

If I can go anywhere right now, I'll go home and run upstairs and hug my brothers and sister and tell my family, "Sorry for hurting you guys like that." And before I wrote this, I got off the phone wit' my auntie. She seven. She told to me, "Do you really want to hurt me? Do you really want to make me cry?" I said, "No, I love all you guys, and if I can go anywhere, that's where I can go," and that's why.

-Pd

From The Beat: We can appreciate why going home would be your dream vacation right now. Don't forget, it's not what you tell your auntie or anyone else, it's what you do!

Going To USC

My dream vacation is to go to the best college, for I can get a good education, for I can get a good job and buy a house, for I can show my family that I wasn't a failure in life. That will make my mom feel very proud of me. And the dream college I will go to is USC College. I picked that college because I want to play football and other sports. I think that this college will be good for my education. This is my dream vacation.

-German

From The Beat: You've set your goals very high; USC is one of the best universities in the country. Yes, it has a very famous football team, but in order to get to play, you have to get admitted to the University, and you can only do that by making a very good high school record and have a diploma. How close are you to achieving that? Don't give up this dream. You can do it.

My Dream Vacation

My dream vacation is to go to Amsterdam and be able to smoke freely without police or people messin' with me. That's my dream.

-William

From The Beat: Well, when you're there, be sure to visit the many art museums (Van Gogh, for example) and Anne Frank's house where she and her family hid out from the Nazis. That's when you're not in the coffee shops smoking.

Bein' Locked Up

What 'sup Beat? It's ya boy Kada just chillin'. Keeping it goin', feel me, but bein' locked up is bs 'cause the staff talk hella shhh to you, and if you talk back, you get room time. To keep it real, I don't care about room time, but I hate bein' locked up. The judge just be tryin' to take people from they parents, and that ain't coo'. So to all the people goin' to group homes or anywhere but home, knock the time out and never come back to this bs. I'm out. Holla at me later Beat.

-Kada

From The Beat: If you really hate it as much as you say, you'll never be back! And since you can't make the judge or the system different, why not stop giving them the power they need to take you from your parents?

Dis Shady

A da feds tryna play me
But they DA he really hates me
I'ma prove to the DA that dude was really mistaken
But it's good though, I'ma be out in three minutes
Check me out I ring a bell. Holla at cha boi!

-Jabba

From The Beat: So, do you mean you'll be out in three minutes because you're actually innocent?

Trippin' In Hawaii

To go to Hawaii on a first class plane, then sail on a big boat, wear swimming pool be on and then stay in a fancy hotel. Go to the beach swim in the ocean.

-Ali

From The Beat: Have you ever been swimming in the ocean? Where?

I Miss My Baby Niece

Right now I would want to be at my house, being with my big sister's baby. I really miss her. If I was with her right now, I will be playing with her. I let her do anything she wants to do in my room. She really likes being in my room because she has a really good time. Her name is Delilah. She is one year old. My sister buys a lot of toys for her to play with.

I really like pinching her cheeks, but sometimes she starts crying and my sister gets mad when I be doing that to her. In my room she be doing all kinds of stuff. She be watching TV with me, and she be messing around with everything in my room. She be picking stuff off the floor and puts it in her mouth. I really wish I could be with her right now.

-Tank

From The Beat: We're sure that she also wishes you were there with her right now. The only way you can guide her along the right path is for you to walk on the path yourself. If you act shady, it won't matter what you try to teach her with your words. She'll do what you do. Remember that when you get back with her.

Waitin'

I remember when I was little
Playing games with all them other kiddies
As I got older, I got acknowledged by the game
Living this risk-taking life has got me going insane
Had a feeling I would get caught sooner or later
Doing all those things I did makes me feel like a hater
Feeling like shhh, 'cause I can't get back the time
Sittin' in my cell, just thinkin' 'bout mine
How is my family?
How will my case turn out?
Gotta stay in here for a couple more months
And it ain't no doubt
Time is the only thing controlling me
Waitin' for the day 'til they set me free

-Chinese Boy

From The Beat: Time controls us all... it just keeps moving forward no matter what we're doing. So we suggest that you don't just "wait" for time to move, but you use this time to read, to educate yourself, to learn about things you don't yet know about, and to prepare yourself for a life of freedom that doesn't put everything at risk, and that allows you to stay home with your family.

When I'm Locked Up

When I'm locked up I think about my family and my all brah-bras I pray for every day. I love and I hope that they are safe. But yeah, I always get locked back and forth to this hell hole. But I ain't even going to lie, I don't think I'm going to stop coming here 'cause of my life style. Plus, I do it for my brah brahs, I promise it won't stop, once I begun I promise I'm going to keep it going I really don't want to come back to this shhh.

-Money Earnin' Vernon

From The Beat: We're pretty tired of seeing you come back into this place! And we're even more tired when we read that you're telling the system that you plan to come back. So, don't try to tell us this is a hell hole because it seems like you like it here. So just keep doin' it for your "brothers" and keep watching time pass you by.

What I Love

Locked up, again
Missing you already, but loving you 'til the end
Sleeping on a cold, hard bed
Only comfort I feel is having you in my head
Looking around the room at the walls and the floor
Look down and I see your face
Makes me yearn even more
I love you. Hope I don't lose you like this
Hoping I get out soon
So I can be with you and earn a kiss
At least now I have a window with a good view
Staring outside, wishing I was with you
Watching the cars pass by
Wondering, why?
Why is this world the way it is?
Why did I get locked up and came to this?
Why is it that I love you more than anything?
Why can't I get you out of my mind
No matter what day it is?
I guess that's how God made us
And I know I fell in love with the right one
You are my everything!
Every other female, to me, means nothing
I want us to last forever
I want us to grow old together
I want to be devoted to you
To be with you right now
There's nothing I wouldn't do
Wondering every day what you are doing
Hope you are going good, and studying
I never want to see or know you are in here!
I want your heart to be near
I don't want to make you shed a tear
I don't ever want to break your heart
With you, I'm a be smart!
Lose you to a beezie?
Never allow it, I won't
I love you!

-Anonymous

From The Beat: There are three lines in this powerful love poem that we want to ask you about. The first is: "Why is it that I love you more than anything?" The second is: "You are my everything." And the third is: "There's nothing I wouldn't do." What we want to know is this, if all of these things are true, how is it that you did something (that, at least for that moment, you loved even more than her) that allowed the system to remove you from her? If there's "nothing" you wouldn't do, how about giving up whatever you did to get here? Are you up to that?

Dream Vacation

If I had a chance to take a dream vacation, I would get my maine thang and take her to Hawaii, just me and her. I would show her the time of her life because she deserve it. We would go to the fanciest hotel out there. And we would make sweet love until the sun came up. That's my dream vacation.

-Cal

From The Beat: Don't be too sure it would be just you and her. A lot of the "dream vacations" in this issue are in Hawaii.

My Vacation

My dream vacation is to go to China or Mexico with four million in American dollars so I can buy hella shhh. That's my dream vacation.

-Josh

From The Beat: In nearly one hour, all you could give us was two short sentences. If you want this dream vacation to come true, you'd better show more effort than this lazy attempt.

Runnin' In My Mind

What's up Beat? It's ya boy Chunky. I'm just chilln' wit' the thugs in here. It's lightweight crank in unit-6. This the best unit. But when I first came here, they sent me to unit-3. I had a fight in there. That's why they sent me to unit-6. But I like this unit better.

But yeah, I can't wait to go to Samoa. My brother out there. He playing football. He even got a car already and he only been there for one and a half week. But I'm end this with a prayer:

"Our father in heaven, please guide us while we sleep tonight. Please guide my brothers tonight while they sleep and my other cousins. Bless our family and watch over them. Amen!

-Chunky

From The Beat: Amen. (We also like this unit.)

Dream Vacation

My dream vacation would be me and my homies in Miami on the beach or either at the spring bling. I wouldn't want us to have to worry about nothing I want us to be rich and famous and just have a great time. I want us to have all the girls, weed, drank and money we would ever want. I would want the fantasy life but I want it to be every day.

-Gregory

From The Beat: But you didn't explain why all this should happen in Miami. Couldn't you do all these things anywhere? What's special about Miami?

Stayin' Alive

Oh my block survival mean stayin' alive and not playin' around on tha block 'cause when you play around, you get caught slippin', especially when all the beef is on. You gotta stay wit' da cannon 'cause if you don', you ain't tryna survive. You just ain't smart enough to figure it out, but you can have dah walley and still get caught slippin' and catch a hot one. When I see cats get murked on my block, I step my game up 'cause I ain't tryin' ta get caught slippin' da way I seen some cats got caught slippin'. Dat's crazy right dere. But holla back.

-Peanut

From The Beat: Well, since you have seen that you can lose everything whether your packing or not, what options do you see for yourself to get off the block altogether?

I'm Sorry Killah Moms

You told me slick and smooth, but I end up getting' caught.

Now I'm stuck up in da halls and you chillin' on couch,
Now I'm starin' at six walls like, "Damn, let me out, soon."

I'm getting' sent out the state, in a year reclaim ma place.

But in tha meantime, I'm sorry,
I made a big mistake now I got chu stressing
Can't get asleep, 'cause I made a big mistake
By almost shootin' her in tha face,
Now they sayin' attempted murder, robbery, and assault
It's good though, don't trip
I'm be out in "three minutes."

-Jabba

From The Beat: We don't follow your ending. We're glad that you only "almost" shot her because if you had succeeded, think of how truly gone more than one life would be. When you look back at your "big mistake," can you identify times and places where you might have made different choices and avoided the entire situation to begin with?

Dream Vacation

My hands are cold and the beef is ill
 But whatever I do, I'm a tote that steel
 Acting hard, but ninjas know w'at's the deal
 Phony ninjas like them get pealed
 Express my feelings—that's how I feel
 Some ninjas acting hard, but they soft, like tissue
 You know that's true, but that ain't the issue
 I know ninjas from the block that robbed a ninja
 That they was messing wit' on his own block
 Man, they did this guy "shady"
 But my dream vacation was all a dream
 That shhh was amazing
 And, yeah, "It's chips"

-Sauce

From The Beat: So we guess that carrying a gun is what makes you not "phony." We've read it so many times before that we're not very impressed. It's too bad your imagination is so limited by the tiny block you occupy. The world is a very big place and it's possible — jut possible — that there are things out there that would blow your mind and make your steel deal unreal.

Dream Vacation

I wish I can go back to Los Angeles and kick it with the homies. I miss wakin' up every day going with the homies to the corner of our block, drinkin', smoking 'dro, havin' females and shhh. I remember one day when I got up and went straight to the corner, there was three bad females ready for me and my homies. We had drank, and 'dro. We was so gone I just grab' one of the females and took her straight to the house... I was only 12 years old.

The homies from LA is not like the homies from here. I mean, over dere, the homies show more love dan here. Out here, they just care about they dough. I feel dem, dough, but the homies show more love out there, and I like it dat way. I also want to go back down there 'cause all my older cousins and older homies out there and they used to treat me like their lil' brother. Dat's my dream.

-Lil' Vago

From The Beat: Of course you feel more love in places you know and among people you love and who love you. We hope you get back to LA, but we also hope you start thinking about some other things that may be more important for your future than "drank and 'dro."

The Way I Am Feelin'

The way I am feelin' right now is like forget the world and who live in it because don't nobody give a damn 'bout me. That the way I feel. When yo' mind is cold or you can't think 'bout shhh, yo' mommy, yo' block, nottin' but them walls. That just the way I am feelin'.

-No Name

From The Beat: You forgot to put your name on this. Don't let your anger at the world do things that only put you back in the box you hate so much.

Why?

Why people pray not to die
 When we live to die
 Some people lose their life early
 While some live life long
 Some people live long, straight, and right
 While some like short, poor, and wrong
 Some people lose everything at a young age
 Some people are born without anything
 Why people pray not to die
 When we live to die.

-Big Oso

From The Beat: Even though we all are destined to die, maybe we pray that it doesn't happen any time soon.

Back On The Block

Back on the block
 I'm gone keep it real young homies keep it hot
 That shhh don't stop
 Y'all know what's up with me
 I'm the king of the E
 For y'all that don't like me, see me when y'all see me

-Illy Ack

From The Beat: We had to take several lines about your set out of this poem. By the way, you're not back on the block, you're back in the box.

How Am I Going To Be A Father

When I'm in this cell, all I think about is when I'ma getting out, what the fam doing, how the homies doin'. Is my baby okay and what the judge go do to me and how long they go keep me, and how I'm going to change and be a father and stay away from the police.

-Lil' Duce

From The Beat: One thing for sure, you can't be a real father if you're locked up. So that's the first question you have to ask: do you want to be a real father or not?

Home For All Of Us

A dream vacation for me is to go somewhere, to go somewhere fun, where me and all my friends can go and kick it and do whatever we wish without having to worry about the police or anything. A place where we can all go and forget about worries, a place like home, but home for all of us.

-Cito

From The Beat: What a sweet dream this is Cito. It reveals your heart.

Would You?

Would you ever be down?
 Down to ride
 Down to be
 There for me?

Would you ever love me
 For me?
 Or when I'm sad
 You make me smile?

Would you ever be real
 And tell me your problems?

Would you ever think of me
 If we decide to be friends
 And still love me
 Tomorrow?

Would you ever ask me
 To marry you
 And live 'til we are
 Wrinkled and old?

Would you ever give me
 A second chance?

-Lucero

From The Beat: Have you taken time to just be with yourself and your own thoughts about who you are and who you want to be? Sometimes, we can get so wrapped up in what we believe is love, that we forget about knowing and loving ourselves.

Tha King Outside "Tha Box"

Up in this place I always be thinking of my two families that I got. First and foremost, my blood family — mom, my sis... my dad up in jail, hoping we was both out the system so we can be together, so that we can once again share more memories with the rest of our family like old times.

Second on my list are my real down ta ride carnales from the barrio, which will always be a part of me like da homie doin' some time right now. Missin' ya bro! And some of my other homies with which I have had plenty of crazy memories. With that I will never forget,

Anyways, hopefully I'll get out this place so that I can ride side be side with ma real ninjas. Alrato!!

-Young Speedy

From The Beat: We hope you get out of here too, but if all you can think about is riding with your homies, how long do you think you'll stay free?

Dream Vacations

What's good with The Beat Within? Me, shhh, chillin', keepin' it lit, ya heard. But this little title caught my attention because no other one caught cha boy. But my dream vacation is to go somewhere with a lot of females just everywhere you look, hella females with thongs on and hella sunny. I'm out there with my wife beater on shorts, fat chain dangling low, diamonds in the mouth and icy-ass time piece and a fresh fitted hat on. It a probably be one of the best day of ya thug life. Get back at cha boy ASAP.

-Young Bundy

From The Beat: Sweet dream, Al, but maybe you're dreaming of a world surround by females because you've allowed yourself into just the opposite world! What's up with that?

Don't Do It Forever

What's poppin' wit' The Beat. This yo' boy A.N.T.O. holding down the 'hood in unit 7. I'm gone start off wit' this. Living the "thug life" busting guns is cool to some ninjas for the time being, but you can't do that forever. But I got a lil' message for y'all.

Guns is busting, moms is crying
Ninjas wit' that shhh, so them ninjas is dying
Police come to tape the scene off,
Put the suit on him
Get him ready for the coffin.

-Anto

From The Beat: You say busting guns is cool for a minute but you can't do it forever. The problem is, forever may only last a second when you're dealing with gun. You never know. None of the young men who have been killed in street violence thought it be end for them. Don't wait. Stop now.

I Make It Happen

I make it happen
No rappin', no acting,
This beef shhh I am the captain
No nappin' just clappin'
If yo' homie fall you know what happen
Come to my jets and try to ask what happen
Then ask for Illy cause I make it happen
Fo' my homies I stay in action

-Illy Ack

From The Beat: Is this what you call staying in action?

Forget Them

Yeah man, what's crackin Beat? This Lil' Lazy just hoggin' it up in this weak-ass posse to be, max- U7. Man I'm laughin' my ass out, one more time I got away from another PO's anger. Yeah, ya know after I ran from the ranch, my PO was tryin' to send me to YA. But since they hella dumb, they couldn't send me, ya feel me!

But yeah, though, right now I was closer to go there, but the new law that they are gonna pass on the first of October is on my favor because the only people going to Y.A. is the people with strikes an' I don't have one. Ha ha. Forget the police, forget my PO. I love the judge though. She hella coo'.

-Lil' Lazy

From The Beat: So, if the new law keeps you out of YA, where are you going? Do you think you're smarter than everyone in the system? That's a dangerous belief — especially considering where you are. Anyway, we're glad you escaped the YA consequence, but don't do anything to give them the last laugh.

Bad Advice

A time I got bad advice was when my friend gave me the key to a car and told me I could drive it and it wasn't stolen. And then I ended up in here. I should have just took my own advice and went home and smoked a chop. But I wanted a car and was tired of walking at the time. I let my friend who gave me the keys influence me too.

But it all comes down to me. Choices! And I made da wrong one. I might not be in here next time 'cause I go get L's (Drivers License), so I don't have to walk no mo. For real!

-B

From The Beat: You mean you not only drove a stolen car (which you had to know was stolen), and you drove it without a license? Choices, indeed!

Lightweight

Man, I lightweight be going crazy in here. The only thing that kind of keeps me sane is thinking about the homies and how they've been there for me while I been in here.

-Vicious

From The Beat: You're lightweight driving us crazy with pieces that are just two or three sentences long! Why don't you spend a little time what you mean by "going crazy." What are the symptoms?

Freedom

Freedom. That's all I think about. Sometimes I don't even think about what I'ma do when I do get out. I just wanna be reminded of what the free world is like.

I got family on my mind, money on my mind, sex and love on my mind. I do a lot of fantasizing and dreamin' in here. It seem like all my thoughts are dreams. I can just lay down, close my eyes and I get visions of my past six months ago. I miss all that studio action I used to have, make hit after track after hit.

I miss my souljas... Them dudes is my brothas, really my blood cousins, but blood don't make us no closer. I'm in it; they in it; I'm it. Them the only ninjas I ride for, love it or hate. All this revolve around freedom.

I miss it all and I know it miss me. It's Payne baby, better days coming my way. Ninjas gone be mad but hey. It ain't in my hands or theirs. It's all up to my father upstairs. Heads up!

-P Crooks

From The Beat: We believe that better days are coming your way if you and your "souljas" can be strength for each other and keep each other free. If everything is up to God, what do you think he expects of you?

That Advice!

I had so many people give me advice, but for some reason it doesn't work for me. I try the advice and it doesn't work. It backfires on me and something bad always happens. That's why I don't take advice. I just go with the flow and let life take its course!

-Dreamer

From The Beat: When you just "go with the flow," you're basically saying that it doesn't matter to you when the flow goes through juvenile hall. We don't think you're facing your own responsibility for why good advice fails to help you. Life doesn't just take its course. You are directing it.

Week After Week

To the Beat. Last week, y'all said my beat was weak. Y'all said y'all hear the same shhh week after week. But I see y'all here week after week, so if my shhh weak, then forget The Beat. Some'in' new.

-Mr. President

From The Beat: It may be new, Mr. President, but it's not very enlightening. Just think of it this way, the truly weak pieces don't get printed at all. (This one just barely made it!)

Out The Box

One thing takes me out of the box is going to sleep. Then I think when I'm getting outta here and back on the street chilling once again. That's what help me get out of the box. When I go to sleep, I feel like I'm not in jail. It feel like I'm at home.

-Ace

From The Beat: Do you think about any changes you want to make on the outs? If not, what's going to prevent you from coming back?

Dream Vacation

My dream vacation is to go somewhere outta tha state or country like da Bahamians or some kind of island dat I can chill wit ma main girl and don't have to worry about nothing and have a good time. I would go to hella parties over there and blow hella 'dro wit' my ninjas an' chill wit' ma girl in a telly.

And before I get further, I would throw a big-ass party wit' hella people there and everybody drankin' an' blowin' an just havin' it crackin' wit' no problems to mess it up. But yeah dat's ma dream vacation and I'm out.

-Twon

From The Beat: As island with no problems? Ah, yes, it sounds like a dream... By the way, why go to an island if you're not going to go to the beach and swim in the ocean? All the things you wrote about you can do in San Francisco.

I Got My Plans

I think about a lot when I'm up in ma room, like things I did in da past—stuff that I wanna do when I get out. My boyfriend, an' how we got through hella shhh, and how I look forward to seein' him when I get out. My goals, and how I plan on getting to Atlanta to go to college, and what I plan on doin' after that. Yeah, though I don't know if I'm gone get there, but I know I got my plan, an' what is that they say? "If you don't have a plan when you get out, you plan on coming back"—shhh, something like dat. I'm out.

-Lil' Doodie

From The Beat: Basically, if you don't have a plan, you allow yourself to be part of someone else's plan. Good for you for thinking ahead. We would have liked a few more details, though. Have you finished high school yet? What do you want to study in college? What do you want to be in five or ten years?

Dream Vacation

My dream vacation, would be to be free, then the possibility of going to Spain and learning how cook, and you know talking to honnies and relaxing, to be free and explore the world is me.

-Halo

From The Beat: What is so special about Spanish cooking? Do you have a favorite dish?

Escape From Dis Shh

Man I tired of dis shhh! Get out, come back, same ninjas in here, same clothes, same food, same routine. And it seem like I'm da only ninjas from my block in and out of jail all the time. I want to escape...

-J. R

From The Beat: Could you write a longer piece about all the things you want to escape from? Whatever on your list is beyond your control should stop being your focus.

Almost Gone

What it do Beat? They shippin' ya boy to Nevada. Man, I'm 'bout to go out there on some workout shhh, ya dig? But they give a ninja 12 months out there, man! Look at this shhh as a vacation. Yeah, me and my right hand man. We on vacation right about now givin' these mans some room to breathe, ya dig.

I wanna thank the Beat fo always letting me express how I be feelin on paper. But I'm gone. I hope y'all keep doin' what y'all doin' and helping these young men and women out. Keep ya head up.

-Jr F Ryhda

From The Beat: Well, Jr Rhyda, you know that The Beat is always open to you, wherever you are. In fact, we'd love to hear how it is in Nevada. Enjoy your vacation...

... member that Alice survived her weird adventure and returned to "the real world."

The Stars

Damn, at night I can see the stars.

It's a different experience living in the city—you don't see too much of that.

Man, when I look up at the stars, I get lost in my thoughts.

There's this star that always catches my eye.

I think it's my homie, Mono, looking down on me, telling me to keep my head up.

Stars ain't the limit to follow yo' dreams, homie.

-Menace

From The Beat: Nice writing. It's sad that when you look into the vastness of the heavens that is so easy to view at night down at the Ranch, that you feel your homie who has died. Besides telling you to keep your head up, what advice do you think Mono would give to you? Would he tell you, that your young life is worth more than anything else and that it's your most essential job to protect it?

Run Away Dog

Let me tell you about an animal story. I have a full-blooded blue nose pit. One day me and my homeboy were chillin' outside in my front yard with my pit bull King. He was chained up to a tree in my front yard. All of a sudden he seen a cat and charged in its direction and broke his chain.

Me and my friend chased after him but couldn't catch him, so we went back to my house. My dog didn't come back for hours and I was worried that animal patrol got him.

It was already late at night and he hadn't came back so I fell to sleep. But in the middle of the night I woke up to someone knocking at my door.

I got up and answered the door and it was my dog pawing at the screen door. I was happy that he came back. But I thought that was the mostest funniest worst thing my dog has done! Lucky he wasn't caught though!

-Cesar

From The Beat: Sounds like you had a seriously smart dog. He knew to come back home, and he knew how to get there! Is he still around? And do you still keep him chained in the backyard?

Some Shhh Off My Chest

I have a lot of negatives all inside my world, because I've done some bad things to you baby girl. I've made a lot of promises and then broke them, not even one whole day after I spoken them.

Now I'm back here flowin' in the vent talking about the girls and having them pay my rent, but really that's not what I want for my life because I had my girl for almost three years and want her as my wife.

I feel like shhh because we aborted our first baby, but I think we weren't ready not sure but just maybe. I want to get out and be with my girl, because I feel without her I lost my world. I love her and I hope that it won't crash, because I hurt my lady in the near past.

I get mad for no reason, just come see. Aye, I'll take you off for talking on my boys. And the probation officer is just trying to sink my boat before I even get a second chance to stay afloat. And I find it so easy to put the blame on them, but it's my freaking fault I am where I am. And now I'm going to put it to rest, and that concludes the shhh I've got to get off my chest.

-This Krugger

From The Beat: You cover a lot of things that certainly many inside j-hall experience: aborting babies, challenges with girlfriends, anger with probation officers, and the realization that it will only be you that will fix your situation. So how are you going to fix you before you crash again?

Actions Talk Louder

Yeah, I got hated on before, way back when just a lil' gangsta, raised up a lil' broke an' all. You know, sporting the same clothes three days in a row, sport the same shoes all year long, kid with more money or a better "class" then me talks shhh, straight hating 'cause I wear what I wear, saying this and that...

After a while of hearing all that. I said screw it, and straight took flight on someone kid, talking about why I kept wearing the shirt I was wearing for the 2nd-3rd day.

I just got mad got in a fight then I realized that power is the best thing against their words.

Action talks louder than words.

-Ace

From The Beat: Little kids can be so cruel - especially because not having money is nothing to be ashamed of. Have you ever wondered where it comes from - that desire to tease someone for being broke?

Thinking Outside the Box

I think of myself outside the box, when I get a letter from one of my loved ones. When they tell me what's going on in the outs I kinda think I could be there with them.

-Feelin' Within

From The Beat: You could write more than this. For example, why aren't you there with them, and what are you planning to change so that you can be with them?

Dogs Love Weed

I went to my friend's house and he had a fat Labrador, which was fat because my friend always smokes him out and he gets the munchies. He had a Jack Russell Terrier that held a ball in its mouth the whole time. My friend's little brother would chase the dog for the ball but the dog always runs away.

Finally my friend's little brother obtained the ball and the dog attacked him and got the ball back. So this dog has a ball in his mouth 24/7, until my friend rolled up a joint and he put it up to the dog's nose. The dog dropped the ball! Everyone was surprised and were laughing.

The dog dropped the ball and followed my friend the rest of the day. This proves dogs love weed!

-Viet Tiger

From The Beat: To us - it just proves that your friend was torturing his dog. Dogs are incredibly loyal, and they will do anything for us, but putting them in a situation where they absorb drugs that affect brain chemistry and perception is cruel! Straight up, we just feel sorry for that dog.

Haters

What do I think about "haters"? I think they are people who have nothing better to do than get others caught up for some bullcrap. There are some messed up people in this world, and "haters" are a good percentage of them. A lot of the cats who are here are here because they got ratted on by some of the people they were rollin' with. But come on, I can't say it's just the "haters" fault. Some of us have to take responsibility for what we do. See, if we don't do stupid stuff, people won't have anything to hate about.

-Michael

From The Beat: The longer you wrote, the more reasonable you became. Keep writing Michael, keep writing.

Hate

Was up Beat, how you been? As for me, just chillin' in the Max. Well I'm writing about hate today.

Hate was in me ever since I was small. It ran with my family that gang bangs, so I was raised around gangs so it is in me to hate on our own rivals. It's just in me because I just think it can't leave out my mind.

I just think about savage shhh I done to my enemies. I'm not proud of it but then again they too have hurt my brothers' hats what makes me hate.

But hate is not a good thing to me it's always going to be here it never leaving like a rat in a sewer.

But screw it, I'm always going to hate. But what can I say, the system is one of the things that got me this way. Con todo mi alma y Corazon, take care to all doing hard time.

-Lk

From The Beat: Do you hate your enemies because they personally deserve your hatred, or just because you were "raised into it"? Have you ever wondered why it is that you have become enemies, especially when both sides have so much in common?

Streets so Addicting

I used to have dreams of playin' on an NFL Team,
 Rising to the top, being the next big thing
 But these streets got so addicting selling cream
 Hangin' on the block with the homies blowin' trees
 Seein' all these Benjamins come so easy
 Pockets stacked full of twenties
 Girls on my jock, or wanting to be on my team
 Young ninja holdin the glock, feelin' like a king
 Wakin' up blocks with the four fifteens
 Jewelry, gold teeth, iced out rings, everything that I want
 Ninja everything that I need, hollerin' out money ain't a
 thang
 Youngsta rippin' yadda mean
 From California to New York, Biggie, Pac rest in peace
 If you ain't gettin' money ninja get away from me
 My eyes wide-open destined to be something
 Tired of all these fake ninjas frontin'
 When it come down to it these ninjas stay runnin' these
 Ninjas keep pushin' my buttons, these ninjas soft like
 cushions
 Keep playin', I got something
 That gone open you up like orange peelings,
 Don't give a shhh , have no feelings for these ninjas
 Come to close to me I'm gonna pull the trigga
 These ain't rhymes, they my life, baby ninja

-Jamil

From The Beat: Well, we'd say that you paint an appealing picture of the "gettin' money" life out on the streets, but you are leaving out too much of the story: You're leaving out how it feels after you've had a gun pulled on you and your cash stolen, and you can't go to the cops for help because it's not legit money. You're leaving out how it feels in back of the black and white, how it feels alone in your cell, how it feels knowing that your so-called partners are running free. If you're going to sing this song, you've got to include everything!

A Time With Dolphins

I remember when I was in a group home I went as a VIP to see dolphins up close. When we got to the Marine Research Lab, I actually went to a place that was strictly for staff only. I got to shake a dolphin's fin!
 When I was about to let go, the dolphin pulled me into the water! I actually swam with two dolphins. I remember their names: Puka, and, Primo. Well, that was my short adventure with the dolphins.

-Kitsune

From The Beat: Hey, there are people who pay big bucks to swim with the dolphins. They lay down the cash and take their chances that a dolphin will swim by. And you, you lucky guy, you had the dolphins invite you into the tank. That's a story for your grandchildren.

RIP Hannibal

What's up, it's the homeboy Boxer. But today I'm going to talk about my pit-bull Hannibal. Man, well Hannibal was a sick ass red nose, he was my little homie. One day when I was at work, my mom called me and said my dog got taken by the Animal Control or something like that.
 They said my dog broke into the next door neighbor's back yard and tried to attack them. The animal control said they have to run test to get my dog back and then four days later I got a call saying they put my dog to sleep. I couldn't even see my dog again! They just put it to sleep!

Well yeah, that's my story until next time.

-Boxer

From The Beat: Hey we're sorry to hear about your dog. It's especially cold that you didn't get to say goodbye to him before they put him down! Did you ever get another one after that?

Thinking Outside the Box

My mind makes flashbacks on my great positive memories every single time I close my cell door on myself. Time makes someone think outside the box and time makes your incredible mind explore.

- Tortuga

From The Beat: We now have an "El Mosco" and an "El Tortuga." Well, turtles don't eat flies, so you're both all right. Next time, tell us some of the things that your incredible mind explores.

Lay My Head Down

As I lay my head down
 I slowly drift on a memory
 From being in the greens,
 Surrounded by nothing but family,
 But now my surroundings have changed
 And in Juvenile hall I reside,
 And because of the strength of their loyalty,
 A couple of homies are by my side.
 I refuse to be like those before me
 And all the others that will follow those who dishonor
 their brothers Just 'cause of the law, and the truth they
 don't swallow.
 They spit it out... They will be forced to leave town...
 But that don't apply to my homies, they're as solid as
 they come. So until my surroundings change again in
 this life
 We will never be done.

- Shotgun

From The Beat: Having love for your "brothers" "homies" is a fine trait, but swearing allegiance to the cause that caused you to be here seems like a prescription to return. Everyone thinks they're smarter than the law, that they'll never get caught and pay the price. That's why so many people are making a living off the nearly two million people we lock up in this country every year! Wake the hell up!

Cutting, Hitting & Changing

I cut my wrist once
 I cut my wrist twice
 Just to see how much it bleeds
 I let the blood slide down my wrist
 To my finger tips
 And drip
 Down to the devil's lips
 The situation flips
 Now I
 Strike her once
 I strike her twice
 A rosy check
 And
 Bloody lips
 What have I done
 I start to trip
 Situation flips
 Your legs are spread
 I'm about to faint
 Pop comes the head
 Now my new name's
 Dad
 Time to change.

-Dreamcatcher

From The Beat: Changing our lives is no easy thing, but you have plenty of issues to deal with, if you are not already. First you tell us about cutting yourself, then you speak about striking a person, we assume your girlfriend, then later you find yourself having sex with her and soon you are parents. Can't run now, that is if you are serious about giving your child a life with his/her father. How are you going to change? Who's your support? Can you do this alone? How bad do you want to change? What's your plan simply to not return to juvenile?

My Dream Vacation

My dream vacation is to go to Hawaii with my family and my girlfriend. We would go to the beach and the clubs with some girls and just play that game. You know how, go have fun with my family, forget everything in the past, like that we forget all the problems and dream of getting out of here, and then go. First is getting out of here. And then what happens in the future is go to Hawaii with my family and especially my lady.

- Mosco

From The Beat: We have been to Hawaii and it's very beautiful. Have you been swimming in the ocean? What else would you do there?

All Gone

Well Beat, when I think outside the box, I think about being at my home which is in my 'hood. I think about being there because I love it. I was always there just kicking it with the homies. Just posting up y echando el verbo al las jainas (just spitting the game at the ladies).

But now all that is gone because I'm all up in la torcida (locked up). Hope this teaches me a lesson, so I can go back to all that. Well this Psycho-minded vato has to go. Alrato and much respect.

-Lil' Psycho

From The Beat: We don't understand you when you "hope this teaches you a lesson" so you can "go back to all that." Isn't some of "all that" what got you here? What is the lesson you "hope" this has taught you, and when will you know if you've learned it or not?

Thinking Outside The Box

Aye, what up Beat? It's your boy Thirst again comin' from the max... Well I just got out of court on the 26th of September. Yaaaay, I think something is finally about to happen.

Well, let me write a little about this topic, "Thinkin' Outside The Box." How do I cope being in my room all day? Well, I simply do things like push-ups. I just do a bunch and it takes my mind somewhere else. But what gets me the most is just the random memories floating into my head. It's really nice. Well Beat, much love to all serving long sentences. All right then Beat, it's about that time, till next time. Late.

- Thirst

From The Beat: We wish you had told us a little of what you think is finally about to happen. Do you ever read (or write) to take your mind off things?

Dream Vacation

My dream vacation would turn out to be how I would want to live the rest of my life. It would have to be somewhere in the Caribbean where the temperature is always in the 90s and every morning there's a beautiful sunrise and at night, an even better sunset.

During the day, you can just sit on the beach where the waiters and waitresses serve you 24 hour a day. The temperature is such that you can sleep on the beach at night. At night, you can go out dancing and listen to beautiful island music.

But in the end, my dream vacation would not and could not exist without a special someone to share in this paradise with. For that matter, it doesn't matter where I would be, as long as with I was with that person.

- Jabari

From The Beat: This sounds like a beautiful vacation for a romantic soul. We have faith that you will find someone to share your dreams with.

Thinking Outside The Box

To get outside the box, I look out my window and it reminds me about how I could be chillin' with my cousin. We could be drinking and smokin' bud, and going to parties.

-King Tut

From The Beat: Well, if all you're thinking about is drinking and smoking and going to parties, you're doing nothing to prepare yourself for life after the hall — life that doesn't include coming back! (We had to give you this Beat name because you didn't give us a name.)

Thinkin' Outside the Box

How I think outside the box. I read books and I go to school. I try not to think I'm locked up. I also concentrate on school work. I'm on a camping trip I say. I go back home in November. I've been camping since July. In this camping place they let us go play handball and I'm A level in here. Well I can't wait till I get out from this camping place. Well that's it till next time Beat. Alrato.

- Silencio

From The Beat: You're on a camping trip, huh? That's an interesting way to think about it. If you spend your time escaping, does it prevent you from thinking things through? Sounds like you do what you got to do. But tell us, how does this help you in the long run? Does it?

My Dream Vacation

My dream vacation would be when I'm with all my loved ones, such as my family, friends and my lady. We would be at the beach hanging out having a good time, BBQing, drinking smoking, swimming having the best time of our life together because time is precious.

We wouldn't know when any of us or our loved ones will ever leave and never come back and we wouldn't be there to say we really loved them or to tell them how much we cared about them. So everyone start now if y'all want to, which you should. This is my dream vacation for now, and but I'm planning to make it a reality when I am done serving my time to the place they call CYA or we call it now.

Aight then Beat that's all. I got to go now, I'm out! Much love and respect, I'm out of here,

-Viet Ox

From The Beat: Don't let anything anyone says to you at YA stop you from pursuing this "dream vacation." You can see what is important in this world, so keep your mind set on giving up the unimportant in order to preserve the important.

Sitting In My Cell

As I sit in my cell, I sit on my bed
And think about the days, years, hours and minutes I've spent
Coming in and out of here. Wondering why it took me so long

To open my eyes. There's nothing I could do.
Hoping one day I get out to be with my wife and kids,
But I made a choice to do my dirt and now I'm paying the price on the tag I did,
I'm stuck in this dark cloud that seems to blind my eyes.

I can't really see the other side;
I'm in a war zone with my mind.
Fighting to survive and keep alive.
Holding on 'cause only the strong strive,
Holding on 'cause it it's only a matter of time.

- Rascal

From The Beat: Is it that you can't see the other side, or you can't see a way to get there? We think if you truly want to get there, you will find the help that exists for that to happen. In the meantime, keep holding on.

Crazy

Wow Beat, my aunt just got hit by a car the other day. She was driving somewhere up in Washington and some lady rammed into her van. The van rolled over three times up hill. She had a dog in the car who jumped out the window and ran into someone's house (they worked for the ASPCA, strangely enough).

One of her lungs collapsed and she broke a few ribs, but other than that she's fine.

Her friend who was in the passenger's seat narrowly missed being beheaded by a car door, but he's fine too. Crazy.

-Monk

From The Beat: That is crazy – but it's fantastically lucky that both she and her friend got out without any major injuries. Keep us posted on her health.

Thinking Inside the Box

I'm thinking inside the box,

They keep us on locks,

Staff is always on our jocks.

I hate cops,

They keep bustin' my chops,

But they ain't gonna catch me because I've got hops.

But wait a minute... it must be a dream

Because I'm still in a box.

-Big Kid

From The Beat: We can see that you're sly as a fox,/So how can you prevent those future shocks?/Cause if you thinkin' you can't be caught and put in the stocks/You ain't got brains in yo' head, you got rocks!

Lay My Head Down

When I lay my head down and go to sleep I'm in this dump, but 15 mins. later I'm on the outs. I am chillin with my family and hanging with the homies, eating the food I want to eat, kickin' it... We go to the mall, chillin' with my lady, holding her and kissing her.

Then it all fades away, time to wake up and start a new day in the same shhh hole I fell asleep in.

Find happiness. I find great pain and sorrow

-Feelin' Within

From The Beat: You are faced with some difficult choices — to keep doing the familiar things (and keep looking at the same consequences), or to flip the script and stop doing things with negative consequences and start doing what you know you must do to find that happiness that is eluding you.

Dear Boxer

What's crakin'? This be that one and only, but never lonely vato. I would like to send much love and respect to my boy Boxer. This piece goes out to give him some advice in a positive way.

Well, bro I don't know exactly about your case but it must be serious since your doing time. I hope you learn from the experience, so we can post up in the streets again. And I hope you beat your case. But bro, you gotta not let these fools get the best of you. They're just tryin' to put you down and, remember, we don't let anyone get us down. They can't turn our smiles into frowns.

Well, I gotta go, but keep you head up since I gotta cut this short then a midget on it's knees. (Remember that? Haha!)

-Jose

From The Beat: More than just encouraging your boy to keep his head up and thinking about posting up in the streets again, perhaps your advice to him can be more constructive? How can you guys help each other stay off the streets and out of the Hall?

Dream Vacation

My dream vacation is freedom and not being in the system. I would hang out with my lady, my queen, doing all the things I need to do to take care of us.

But before I dream I must get out first!

-Feelin' Within

From The Beat: What are "all the thing you need to do" to take care of yourself and your lady? It's not just getting out of here (that will happen for sure), it's figuring out what you have to stop doing in order to stay out of here. Go for it!

Buddy, My Animal Story

I have an animal story to tell you guys. It's about my sister's dog, Buddy. Well, I showered with him and when I tried to dry him, he ran around the house and rolled on the carpet, trying to dry himself up. I had to chase him around the house. He looked better when he was a puppy.

He is a mix. His fur is black, white, and gray. He likes to roll over. I like him when he rolls over. It's funny. I miss that dog. And I miss my family. When I was home, I used to put a leash on him and take him out. (to be continued)

-Luis

From The Beat: Luis, we hope you get out soon. We bet Buddy misses you as you miss your family, and him. Do good Luis. Don't come back here.

This Vato Is Back

G-vole beateros? Pues, you know who this is? That one and only one but never lonely, hated by many but loved by plenty: Pantera from Mountain View.

Just droppin' it down with the quickness! Pues simon, I came back from county. I'm back for a month plus and this vato is gone, back out to the calles...

Pues simon I was in county for five months, It was firme, there's hella raza over there... Well this Vato is out without too much to say, pero to all you youngsters, don't let no one get you down and to the homegirls you know what to do. Alrato.

-Pantera

From The Beat: Have we got it right? You went to jail and it was "firme" because so many from la raza are imprisoned there? You're here for a short stint then back to the streets... for how long? Sounds like it's so firme here that you're already planning your return trip.

Thinkin' About Life After The Hall

When my mind is not here up in jail, I'm thinking about what I'm gonna do to never come back here.

I think about my homies, my family, basically my life. I don't consider being up in here life.

I hate it up in here. It's nothin but drama and shhh talk. I'm tired of constantly hearing banging on the walls. I mean just wanna sock whoever's doin' that. I'm tired of hearing the same exact conversations every time. I'm tired of taking only five minute showers. I'm tired of all the drama. I'm tired of having to be careful with every little thing I say. I basically hate it up in here 100 percent.

When I get out I'm never coming back. I'm going cold turkey and gonna stop doin' drugs. Drugs corrupted my mind and made me someone I'm not.

This place is not for me. Well, I'm out. Peace!

-Big Meg

From The Beat: It sounds like you know exactly what you need to do to not ever come back to this place, but you should also think about trying to be positive while you are here and make some friends. You never know, you might make some good ones but it will certainly make the time go faster.

Thinkin' Outside The Box

What takes my mind off the box is when I get a letter or a when I get a phone call. And when I read a book it also takes my mind off the box because when I read a good book it takes my mind like if I were really there.

The best book I ever read was the Bible and how God suffer for our sin and how man betrayed Him and they nailed Him on the cross.

It is nice when we get letters because you feel like if your family is with you. And that the reason I want to change, for my two little sisters because they cry for me to get out. I hope to get out so that I can help my mom with the rent and with the bills. So that's why I want to get out the box.

-Mendoza

From The Beat: You have strong motivations for staying out of here and with your family that loves you. Your two little sisters need a big brother in their life to protect them and to guide them on the right path by walking the right path and therefore being a role model.

Dream Vacation

What up, Beat? It's been a while since I been here or wrote in The Beat. But yeah, the topic for the day is "Dream Vacation."

Well, I'm gonna be greedy and put down two vacations. The first one would be Disney World with my daughter and the second one would be in San Jose in the hills looking down at this beautiful city with all my boys and girls, with no cops around to break it up. Just having a good time, no worries, no stress. "Cause they'd rather see us locked, can't stand to see us laughing. It's that good life, never trippin' when we ride, strivin' for some gold thangs, there's never guarantees what this whole life means. So, for now it's like a dream, will stay ridin with a gangsta lean." Which is true 'cause, there is no guarantees in this life we live.

Well, that all 'till next time. To all in here, stay up and solid. Don't let no one get you down.

-BA

From The Beat: Well, Disney World sounds like a lovely vacation, but we're not sure the two dreams fit that well together since the other dream focuses so much on things that seem like they would separate you from your daughter. Is there a dream vacation that satisfies all parts of your life?

My Dream Brazilian Vacation

My dream vacation is that I would love to go to Brazil, Rio de Janeiro. I would love to visit there because of the gorgeous women that happen to be all over Brazil. I would like to visit Rio de Janeiro because I have heard a lot of wonderful things about that beautiful place. I would like to take photos of the beautiful waterfalls. Well, this my dream vacation. I would like to take pics of the beautiful women that are from there too.

-D

From The Beat: Brazil certainly does sound like an amazing place. It is nice to read about a dream vacation that shows your knowledge of the world.

What Makes Me Think

Well, Beat it's me again: Baby. D. what makes me think outside the box is when I get my sister's letters mostly every day I wish I could be with her on the outs and at our house just listening to music and talking about things.

-Baby D

From The Beat: What kinds of things does your sister write to you about? It sounds like your relationship with her is very strong. Do you write back?

Dream Vacation

My dream vacation would be to go to Egypt. That would be hella cool 'cause I could see the pyramids. I would want to go and see where the sarcophagus was and see how they were buried alive. I would like to ride a camel and do all the stuff that they do in Egypt.

-King Tut

From The Beat: We'd love to be along on this vacation. We'd love to visit the pyramids. It sounds like you've done some reading about ancient Egypt. What else would you like to see on your vacation?

Bad Advice

I took some bad advice and now I'm in here, though I know it was all my fault. But at that time, I just wanted to party so I just cut my bracelet off and I only had a week to go. I had already done like two or three months, but I had to cut it. I think that's the stupidest thing I've done.

-Trouble

From The Beat: It certainly sounds like it was. What advice to you have for other young people who are going crazy on their bracelets? It seems to be a common problem.

Dream Vacation

What's crackin'? This be your girl! Well, my dream vacation would be chillin' in the hood. No cops, no snitches or my mom and dad - just me and my homegirls and homeboys, chillin' for as long as I want. Do whatever I want. Just post up in front of my pad and chill. Cruise around the hood. See what's crackin! So yea I know this would be my dream vacation. 'Till next time, The Beat Within.

-Bianka

From The Beat: This seems to be a popular dream vacation for young women in San Jose. It doesn't seem to different than your regular life, except there are no police. Do you think there should never be any police officers in the world, or just in San Jose?

Thinkin' Outside The Box

What I think about when I'm locked up is the day I get out. It's still a long time before I get out, next year, February 2008. Man, that day goes to my mind everyday.

This is my first time locked up and I got six months. Which is better than going to the ranch, I think, because that's where I was supposed to go. I'm cool off that.

Back to the topic, all I think about is all my other friends out there drinking, smoking and partying without me. I get sad 'cause I think of them all partying, going through good times and bad times. Some homies don't even know I'm locked up.

Everyday I see people come in and out of this unit and I wonder when my time will come to be free and do what I please.

Everyday I think about the last time I drank a beer, did a bottle run, and got drunk. I think about the time when I was drunk and acting stupid, breaking stuff, and running from cops. I always think about this time when I was really drunk and got stuck in the bathroom. I couldn't see nothing. I couldn't open the door. I was all soaking wet 'cause I was wetting myself in the sink. I don't remember anything else, just being on the light rail hella drunk and lying to the people that I wasn't drunk.

-Squishy

From The Beat: Six months is a long time to think about your life and it makes sense to miss partying. But maybe you should reserve some time to think about the positive things you can do when you get out, and to take steps to leave the drinking and partying behind.

The Dream Vacation

My dream vacation would be to an island where I can just forget about the troubles and worries of everyday life. No probation, no enemies, and no hassles with people who you would have otherwise not wanted to meet. For now, that would be my dream vacation.

-Z-Wizzle

From The Beat: This sounds like quite a dream vacation, but wouldn't these things be possible without escaping to another place?

Thinking About The Outs

What makes me think outside of the box is when I get letters from my lady or when my mom comes to visit me on Sunday, and she tells me how everything is going on on the outs, and that homeboys said what's up. Makes me think to do my program for I could get out and go back and chill, because a lot of the homeboys are locked up. And that's what makes me think about the outs when I am locked up.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: Will you change anything when you get back out there, or will you continue the things that led you here? The answer to that question tells us your future.

Europe

My dream vacation would be to Europe. Why I would go to Europe? Can't say, because The Beat won't put it in here. But y'all could imagine why I want to go over there. But if that don't work out, I want to go to ATL (Atlanta) for a vacation and go to school over there. Well, that's all I gots to say. Until next time, late.

-Big Rob

From The Beat: Hmmm, Europe and ATL are pretty different places. What exactly is it about ATL that makes you want to go there?

It's Over

You were the one who said for us to be forever and now you cryin' cause we ain't together.

You still have the pity to say:

'It's my fault,' but you cheated, you lied and you got caught.

"I want to take you back," are the thoughts in my mind.

I did it before, not this time.

I'm done with you girl, done playing your games.

Forget about me, girl. Don't even mention my name.

Cause you hurt me girl, for the last time.

I love you with all my heart, but goodbye.

-Aztec Warrior

From The Beat: Sometimes saying goodbye to someone who has hurt us is really painful, but for the best. You seem to really understand this and this poem is real closure.

No Tears

Thinking outside of this box got me going insane.

My mind keeps playing trick on me, because I stay true to the game, Fools in here crying because they're scared to bang.

You better stop crying because this is not no game.

Looking outside but all I see is pain.

And all this pain got me going insane...

-Insane

From The Beat: First, we had to give you a Beat name 'cause you didn't sign your piece. Second, doesn't it seem strange to you to call someone else a fool when you're the one locked up? What's really driving you insane is a good brain that lets you see the end of the road that's fighting with a code that you inherited and which conflicts with what you see.

The Hills

What up Beat? Well, my dream vacation would be up in the hills of San Jose with a view of my city, in a big mansion with a pool and sick cars. Chillin' with all the homies, having parties every day, partying like rock stars, 'cause there's only one life and we might as well live it to the fullest - with brew and bud all day. No worries, no cops. I would also want a big fish tank in the front of the pad, going all out in the wildest way 'cause this is where I'm from, you know what I mean.

Anyways, for right know that's about it. Well, I'm out. Stay up. Late.

-Judy

From The Beat: Well, the "fish" tank certainly makes this one of the more original pieces. It's interesting that so many people talk about their dream vacation being so similar to their everyday lives.

What's On My Mind

When you're locked up, it seems that it takes forever 'till you get out. I think about everything I've done and everything wrong I've done. I don't really trip about the bad things I do because sometimes, it's worth it. Being in here just makes you wonder about every person you hurt and what they're thinking about. When I think outside the box, I just don't think about anyone outside of the hall. But when I get a lot of time in here for something small, I think it's BS, because then I think about doing worse so I can accept the fact that I should be in here!

-Spider

From The Beat: It is really interesting that you have gotten so frustrated about being locked up for small things, that it pushes you to commit a larger crime. Do you think this is a common way that people who are in the system feel? This says a lot about the state of our criminal justice system.

Dream Vacation

What's up y'all? What it do, Beat It yo' uso from that max unit.

But anyways, I'm gonna write about my dream vacation. Well my dream vacation is at Samoa. I went there when I was young. That's what my Pops said, but I don't remember going to Samoa. I would like to go to the island when I get up out of this place...

And remember going, 'cause I would like to go and taste the Samoan food straight out the island and not the food made over here in America. While I am out there, I wanna get me a Samoan girl. Not one that could beat me up (nah... sole please)! Never that Uce...

But all right then Beat, time is running out. I'll hit you later. All right, gone.

-Giant Samoa

From The Beat: We would love to go to Samoa. Island living is so different from mainland living. We hope you get to see this dream come true.

My Dream Vacation

My dream vacation is chillin' at the beach on a tropical island with my wife: Hot sun with white powder sand and crystal clear blue ocean. I can see us making love on the shore with the tide barely coming over our bodies. It would be something that can be remembered forever, something that's just a dream but soon to be a reality. I can see it now and I've thought of it so many times. So, me and my babygirl are going to my dream vacation.

-Jesse

From The Beat: This sounds like a great vacation. What are your plans to get you and your wife there? Sometimes, planning a beautiful vacation just take a little bit of saving money and planning.

Your Jefitas

What's up Beaters. This is Lil' Silent and for those who know me, que honda? Well my topic for today is if anyone has helped me in the system.

To tell you the truth I think no one 'cause most people in the system always try to screw me over and over some stupid little stuff. But the only person that has helped me out is my lovely jefita. She's been through all I been through and had shed tears for every crazy thing I've done in my life.

For those that are in my situations like mine, you better get your ass straight 'cause your jefitas are suffering for you. You should just get out and spent all the time with her

'cause you my never know if your jefita may leave tomorrow.

That's why I take care of her and have a good time, like if it was her last day. Well I got nothing much to say only to take care to all.

-Lil' Silent

From The Beat: It's good to appreciate the love you have praying and standing by you on the outs... do you appreciate it as much when you're out as you do when you're in here? That's the big thing - to keep the feeling you have now, and remember it later when you get tempted to go back to the old ways...

My Counselors

Some one that helped me in the system are my two counselors and my mental health worker. They make me feel different then when I came to the hall because they show a lot of stuff that I never expect from the hall. I heard a lot more stuff and they care for me. And they help me because this is my first time.

I thank Ms. Ramm for all she did for me. Also I thank Mr. Crockett because he's one of all the counselors that help me the most. Ok Beat till next time this is the only player.

-Crazy Eyes

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you got some help. It is the responsibility of the system to provide counseling and support for the young people who find themselves in its care. That's the big difference between youth lockdown and jail - the idea that someone will try to help. We're glad you got the help you deserved.

Stranded is an Every Day Thang

Was up Beaters, this is that Lil' Silent.

Well my topic for today is if I've ever been stranded, and let me tell you, it's an every day thang in the town.

Times ain't good, but I won't let the homies down.

I am out to get money, won't get left back.

Can't get me a job, but I can get a dub sack.

In my hood every day getting off my slave.

Not tripping off money 'cause I rather gang bang
And kick back with my homies who are down with me

From this moment to the day that I die,

'Cause the ways of my barrio ain't nothing nice

You gotta be down or else you'll pay the price 'cause for
me to do Wrong others must do bad

What makes me happy might make you sad well I don't
got that Much time just to keep your head up and to
take care

Pues the one and only Lil' Silent.

-Lil' Silent

From The Beat: Man, you do sound stranded... stranded in a life that cuts you off from your family and your own dreams for a future. If we told you there is a way off that island you're on, that it's a way to a happier, life with less danger and betrayal and stress, would you ever consider taking that chance for something new?

Night

The latest book I read was called "Night". It wasn't all that long of a book but it was very interesting. Night is about Nazi's (Germans) who killed and tried to wipe out all Jews.

To me, the Nazis was like a gang just like us, killing people and torturing people. I didn't know how many people could suffer that much. I'm glad that it wasn't me, but gee, that's horrible. If I was in that position I wouldn't know what to do. I would probably be lonely looking for a friend or family member. I wouldn't feel comfortable without my family. I would of felt lonely, sad, sick, and nobody to take care of me, but a random mother that cared but wasn't much.

And if I was to survive and live right now, it won't be much of a life because reminincin' back in the past suffering and from today on, living without a family member is not the life I really was looking forward to.

I experience lots of thing by reading this book. It helps me in my life. Night is a good book.

- A Friend

From The Beat: Thank you so much for writing this. One thing that gives us all hope for humanity is the idea that one person can really feel for another's suffering, even if they are totally separated by culture, time and place. Once we truly understand how to feel compassion for so-called strangers, we can take the first step towards healing our own broken hearts.

A Good Visit

What's up Beat, I'm gonna write about something that just happened. Well I was just chillin' in the good ol' cell again, when I got a special visit. It was a social worker, and she told me that I might get on a 300 program, which is way better than what I'm on now (a 602).

Hopefully this does me better because I sick of the hall. The lady is trying to help me by getting me a group home to go to. This news got me really excited because it's basically another chance. Hopefully things work out for me and I do good there.

Well, that's it for me until next time Beat.

-Mike

From The Beat: Congratulations Mike, we hope you get that 300. Keep us posted on what happens!

Blacked Out

What's up Beat There's one point in my life that I was walking with my cousin. We were going to catch the bus to go to my grandma's house for my sister's, nieces' and grandma's b-day, when some rival gang members ran up on me and my cousin.

They at least 20 years old or older. One fool asked me what I bang and where from so I told him what's up. Before I knew it some fool came rushing at me, so I threw a brick at him. Then hella fools came rushing us. Me and my cousin fought back until I got hit in the head by the brick I threw. And that's when I blacked out.

The rival gang members left. Me and my cousin were stranded for several hours, until some homeboys stopped and asked us what happened.

So we told them how we got rushed. They showed some respect and asked if we needed a ride.

-M

From The Beat: We hope you eventually got your head checked for a concussion after you got knocked out. And we're sorry to hear that rage and danger are always just one step away in your lives. It must be exhausting, always looking over your shoulder for enemies, always having to be ready for a fight? Do you think this is how it will always be? With this much hate?

Holes

The latest book I've read would be "Holes" by Louise Sachar. It is about a guy named Stanley Yelnats who stole a pair of shoes, "supposedly". He was sent to Camp Green Lake, where he had to dig holes everyday. At first it was hard for him, but over the days it got easier. One day a camper named Magnet stole some sunflower seeds from Mr. Sir, so he and the other campers were passing them around. When it came to Stanley he dropped them.

Mr. Sir came back and found that Stanley had stolen the seeds. He was sent to the warden, but she didn't seem to care. Later on he started teaching a dumb kid names Zero. Zero dug holes for Stanley and Stanley taught Zero how to read. When the warden found out, Zero ran away.

Three days later Stanley fled and found Zero, they climbed "God's Thumb" and stayed up there for about a week. Then they came back and dug up the treasure, but the warden caught them. Stanley, Zero and the rest of the camp were freed the next day 'cause the O.G.'s closed the camp down.

Stanley and zero sort of rich, but rich enough for a new house for Stanley and enough to buy Zero a team of private investigators to find Zero's mom.

-A Reader

From The Beat: When you get out, make yourself see the movie "Holes" starring Shia LeBeuf, and tell us which you like better, the movie, or the book! You win some you lose some when you make an adaptation from a novel... so let us know your thoughts!

I Could Have Done A Thousand Times Better

There are many times when we were able to think outside of jail, the day room, and our cell.

I think of times when I was outside, I didn't appreciate it like I do now that am I in here. Even just goin' to the bathroom I have to raise my hand.

In my cell I think about my family and what I can do to make up for all the times I've been rotten to them, spend time with them, show them the new and improved me.

It's the little things, like that to get up I have to raise my hand, things like this help me appreciate life more. I've took things for granted.

A lot of things I've thought about when I'm in here, I could have done a thousand times better. People want what they don't have, so appreciate what you do have.

I am getting out soon, and I feel glad I've been able to get this second chance to change my life.

-Nutty Bar

From The Beat: There was a wise monk who once said, "Man wants what he does not have, and ignores what he has. Shouldn't he ignore what he does not have, and want what he has?" It took him twenty years in a monastery to figure it out - and you have achieved that wisdom in just a short time locked up! If you can remember this lesson forever, it might almost make your juvy time worth it!

Michoacan Mexico

My dream vacation is going to Michoacan Mexico with hella beautiful mamas just kicking it in the beach sippin' on Crystal, doing it big, living like a king, but my home is in SJ that's where I would vacation anytime.

There is still lots of places I got to see. Another place I would like to vacation at is Hawaii and stay at a seashore house walking in the sandy beach.

Well that's all I can think about right now Beat, much love to all.

-Lil' Knuckles

From The Beat: You have some ideas where you would love to travel, but like many youngsters locked up, home seems like the ideal place to vacation to.

Stuck in A House

One time I got stuck in a house
I had a cell phone in my pocket

It did not work, and then I saw a dog in a cage

It had blood all over it

Then I went to a room and there was blood all over the floor then when I look out the window

I saw a man coming in the house then when I went to the door and he could not open the door because it had charged at the door then said this door will not open then he pulled out his cell phone he called the cops and said some one is in my house then the cops came and I went to the door.

-David

From The Beat: Was this a true story, or a nightmare? Were you really stranded in a house with blood on the floor? What happened when the cops came? How did you get in the house? When did you finally get out? Whose house was it? We're on the edge of our seats over here!

Forgotten Memories

What up? Me I'm waiting to go to another unit, and then the ranch. Well the latest book I read was "Forgotten Memories" by Art Rodriguez. Well it's about what happen when he gets out of CYA after doing a few years for assault. And his mother trying to over dose her self with prescribed pills, when his dad leaves to Mexico.

There's other things, but I will let you read the book and find out for yourself. Late.

-Youngster

From The Beat: Sounds like a must read. We'll check it out and get back to you!

Mama Tried

So when I am in my room, ha ha in my cell, I think about lots of stuff. I want to get out. This is my fourth time in here and I be at the ranch and back in here. So when I am in my cell I think about my mom, her birthday was yesterday. I told her I am not going to get locked up no more. So I am thinking about being out for my mom. Put it this way, this is what I get for not listening to mom. I got too much going on, now I am going to be here with the homeboys, but I'll be out soon.

-Lil' Edgar

From The Beat: What's the story in getting your educational needs met? Is it possible? What's the plan? You have plenty of work ahead of you. Leave the hood behind, and get your life on track for you and your mama.

Book: The New Boy

The latest book I read was "The New Boy." This book was about a couple of girls that meet this new boy. Then the girls make a bet: Which one of them would he go out with first.

But then the murders begin, and it starts to look like dating Ross is a bad idea.... It looked like flirting with him is just gruesome. But at the end it was so confusing because it turns out to be Ian (Eve's boyfriend) But when I was reading the beginning it look so bad for Ross, because Eve got killed after she went out with Ross. And Faith got killed after she talked to a girl named Jordan.

So that's why is so weird that it looked like Ross murdered the girls. But that's how the book was about.

-Crazy Eyes

From The Beat: This just makes us want to read the book and unravel it's twists and turns for ourselves. Is it your favorite mystery/thriller, or do you have others to recommend for the Beat readers?

The Power of Hate

I think hate is a very powerful word and should not be used lightly. It is at the very end of the spectrum of anger, fear, and disappointment.

I do not believe that you can boldly hate someone without displaying anger toward them over a period of time.

I believe that hate is the end result of a prolonged build-up of the emotion of anger.

-Dylan

From The Beat: So if we caught it before it built up, while it was still anger, do you think we could get it expressed and resolved BEFORE it grew into hate?

Book: Joey Piggsa

The book I have read is called "Joey Piggsa Swallowed The Key". It's about a boy call Joey Piggsa. He is having a hard time at school and keeps getting in trouble at school. In the book it said he cut this girl's nose and I think he gets expelled and goes to a special school.

He was playing around with his house key and swallowed it and then a few days later he pooped it out and that's the end.

-Unknown

From The Beat: We guess this is what they mean when they say watch out for what you eat! Thanks for the recommendation, we'll be sure to check it out.

Madagascar

My dream vacation would be to go to Madagascar. I want to explore it and see all the beautiful sights, the exotic animals in the jungle, go fishing, see the beautiful beaches, swim in the lake and shower in the waterfalls.

I'd go with this girl named Young Eun which is half way across the world right now. Damn, that would be nice. To see the natural world untouched by humans.

-Viet Tiger

From The Beat: Wouldn't it be nice to explore and travel the world! What will it take for you to fulfill this dream with your friend?

My Traveling Mind

My mind travels anywhere but juvenile hall when I'm locked up.

I think about my friends and girlfriend and what they're doing right this second. I also think about my family and I plan out my future for when I get out.

But sometimes I stop wanting to think outside the box because I start reminiscing about the good times I've had on the outs and it makes me sad.

On the other hand though, you gotta start thinking positive and I get anxious to get out, so I can relive good memories and make even new better ones.

-Rosita

From The Beat: New research shows that thinking positive can sometimes even help cure deadly diseases, so it should certainly make your time in the Hall go faster and better.

Thinking

What brings me outside the box is all the conversations and memories of all the old times. When I'm laying on my bed and talking with my roommate telling about my past and all of the good times.

-Barrios

From The Beat: Yeah, talking about the past and good times gets you out of the norm of cell livin'.

Back With My Loved Ones

When I daydream I just think about being out back in Morgan Hill with my love ones.

-Denika

From The Beat: Oh Denika, you leave us hanging! We want to know so much more. Who are your loved ones? What's your favorite memory from home. Which scene do you daydream about the most?

Charged

Chargin me as an adult shhh got me confused
got me on a 187 I didn't no 'bout let alone do,
me and two homies stuck in this facility, another other
in county

tryin' to blame us

But It's good I'll never be a snitch as long as I live,
Locked behind this door jus stuck on my ceiling
Contemplatin my future just freezing my feelings,
All in my sight is murderers, gang bangers and rapists

In bad situations lookin' at three strike cases,

So many places to go hella people to see
anyone can make it so many things I could be

Hell j kats trying to plead insanity

I'm still hopin they let me out of their custody
sometime I wish I would wake up from this lousy ass
dream,

but in the end It's up to the DA and that's reality!

- Nok

From The Beat: Yeah, sounds like a bad case. Hopefully you are being truthful and working hard to better yourself regardless of this situation. This is serious. Your life is on the line and it appears from your writing that you think this is a dream, well, wake up homie and get real step up now and show the system that you are serious about getting your freedom back!

Balanced Emotions

I think people need to hate. Emotion needs to be balance and justified. Everyone hates, even people that have no reason. Like rich kids when they don't get what they want. They think like it's the worse thing that has ever happened to them, because they don't know any worse.

So we all have the same emotions, even if it's not justified, so people need to hate to appreciate what they love. The people that haven't had bad experiences are assholes, very non-understanding and screwed up. Everyone's messed up, but we all need to have a reason, because if you don't you're just stupid.

-Stoner

From The Beat: This is a great truth - like we experience our poverty and wealth, happiness and unhappiness, relative to what's around us. Do you think, for example, that even some of the kids locked up would change how they saw themselves if they could compare themselves with a war refuge from Sierra Leone or the Sudan or the Congo?

New Jersey Weather

My dream vacation would be New Jersey's weather.

In winter the snowy flakes fall, cozy fireplace sitting with the family.

In Fall... leaves turning orange and falling rain splashing on the sidewalks.

In Summertime heat... on the face, sunburn, ocean breeze and waves.

That's my dream vacation.

-Jason

From The Beat: The only season you left out of this beautiful reminder of their beauty is spring! But maybe spring is getting out of jail, that feeling that life is starting over again, and you're getting a chance to renew.

My Mom Said "Don't Go"

What's up Beat? The topic tonight is about good or bad advice I've been given. One night I was about to go and kick it with my homeboys and my mom was asking me to not go. I really wanted to go but I listen to my mom and stayed. That night one of my homeboys got shot several times in the back in a drive-by.

I'm happy I didn't go!!

-Mike

From The Beat: We breathed a sigh of relief to hear this. But it seems like going out with your homeboys is a game of Russian roulette. Any time could be the time that bullet hits you. You got lucky that time, but we hope you're ready to put that 'gun' down. Your mom is right!

Outside

It's funny, you can always seem to be in some kind of cage.

A cell, a time frame, a bad memory, or the world itself.

And what is total freedom? It seems like death.

If life chains us in suffering will death make us happy?

What is life anyway? If we aren't happy until we are dead, can we really call this life?

Or is death just a big sleep? And "in that sleep of death what dreams may come!"

-Monk

From The Beat: Interesting piece, you question freedom and life as a place where happiness is hard to find. We are sad, by the choices many of you made, in some cases forced to make, to put yourself in such an awful predicament. Yes life is challenging, and throws us many curves, but we have to learn from our choices, with the hope we will find some satisfaction down the road.

This Life

The worse advice I ever took was selling dope

It's so addicting I can't let it go

I love the adrenaline of running from the police

I love having money, jewelry, nice clothes

To top it off have women working for me 24/7

I stay high off dro

Riding around the block in the box top Chevy

Momma I'm sorry, I love you but I won't change this lifestyle for nobody

I think about you everyday

I hit the block

I kiss my Jesus piece and hope you don't have to bury my body.

-Baby L

From The Beat: You love a dangerous lifestyle more than you care about your mother. Selfish, that's what you are. You are truly setting yourself up for a tragic fall.

A Lot More To Do

My mind makes me travel to the outs cause I think a lot of stuff like the food in the outs and also the fun stuff. Like the girls or video games or the arcades and mostly being with my family, that's most important thing, to be with my dad, mom, brother and sister.

Well, when I think of the outs it makes me think of a lot of stuff, 'cause there is a lot more stuff to do and more ways to entertain yourself and also you see more people that you know like your cousins aunts and uncles or like your grandma and grandpa, Yea that's what makes me think of the outs.

-G

From The Beat: Wow. It must be good to know that you have such a big family, people who love you and are there to support you in your future, whatever it may hold. Does knowing they love you help you get through your days here?

Dream Vacation

I wonder what a trip to hell would be like, what a crazy idea. If I could go there it would certainly change the way I look at life... so long as I got to come back.

-Monk

From The Beat: Why would you want to go to hell? Not one of your smarted pieces. You know what hell on earth is like, so why would you want to experience a trip to hell? You don't deserve it!

Thinking Outside "The Box..."

I usually tend to daydream a lot.

I like to think about my family, friends, girlfriend, basically everything. I make a pretend agenda for the day, and imagine all the sweets I could be eating. After that dies down, I pick up a book and try to lose myself in it. I think about everything that has ever happened to me, and try to consider my future.

Everyone in Juvenile Hall is young and has a future, and I think they should make the best of it. A lot of random memories pass through my mind, sometimes funny, something sad. I sometimes even think about vacations, previous ones, as well as ones I would like to go on in the future. Being in the "box" lets me do a lot of helpful thinking, but I'd rather be on the outs making dreams come true.

-Senay

From The Beat: That last sentence is so deep we don't even know where to begin. Tell us then, what will you do to make those dreams come true?

Everyone Wants To Have Fun

The dream vacation being in here is going home, but a real dream vacation is going to Brazil, Puerto Rico, Amsterdam, New York, Atlanta, and Florida and other fun places where you can kick it with the fam or your homeboys and drink that drink you like to drink and party and have fun.

'Cause everyone wants to get drunk and mess up and meet girls and have fun wit' them and have a good time.

And that is a dream vacation.

-Adam

From The Beat: With all the good stuff, the traveling, the fun, the friends, the girls - have you ever asked yourself why alcohol always seems to be such a central ingredient to having fun? Not just in your piece but in songs and on TV commercials? Maybe if we're with the right people and in the right place, we wouldn't need the alcohol at all?

Out Of My Cellbox

I'm my cellbox. The thing that takes my mind off the brick walls are cards. They make me feel like I'm just playing with my homies. Also when I get a phone call, it feels like I'm at home with my family.

A letter also brings me happiness. Also, visits twice a week. There has been many times that I dream about being home and being with my lady.

School is also something that takes time off my mind.

It makes the day go by quicker. Reading is also the best thing that takes my mind off the locked up feeling. Reading brings me to another world.

That's what takes me outside my cell box!

-L

From The Beat: On the outs, did you read a lot? Did you like school? When you get out, do you think you'll still be able to take joy in some of the things you enjoyed in here? Because if so, jail could turn out to have been a gift in disguise!

Brazil

Would be to go see my family in Brazil again, it was fun last time I went. No laws to go to the clubs, or you have to be fourteen actually. You could be naked on some of the beaches too. The sites are beautiful. Nothing but sunshine and cool ocean breezes.

I love the hot Portuguese accents most of the females got. Or when they try to speak English back and they cant even finish a sentence. The best part in Brazil, is probably the fiestas they have every summer. It's on, everyday but Wednesdays. And everything is so cheap. But that's where I'd go if I had the chance to go on a vacation anywhere.

-Timmy

From The Beat: You paint such a postcard perfect picture. You make it sound like paradise. Did you feel at home there? Did you like the food? Did you learn any Portuguese? When you are an adult, would you ever consider moving there?

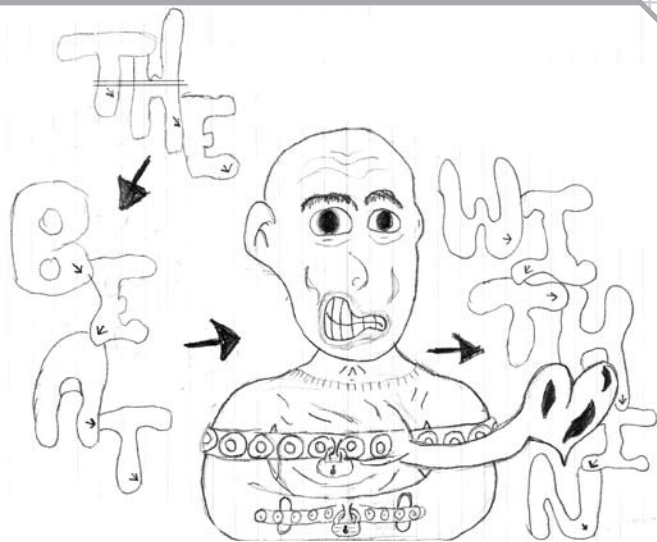
Amsterdam and Europe

My dream vacation would be to go to Amsterdam and explore. I want to smoke and trip out. Eat some foreign food. Have a fun time. Meet a European girl. I like Europe. I've never been there before. I love to travel.

Man I wish I was there right now instead of being locked up. I wish I was locked up in Amsterdam. That would be my dream vacation.

-Purp Haze

From The Beat: We could kinda tell from your nickname that Amsterdam might be a choice. We are kind of curious though, since you live in America where smoking weed is illegal, has your love for "the purple haze" been keeping you back from what you want?



Animal Story

It's me, Luis, here to finish my animal story from last week. I put a leash on my sister's dog Buddy to take him for a walk, but when we got to the park, he ran to the grass. I let him play on the grass, but when it was time to go home, and I tried to get him, he kept on running. I had to chase him. He'd stop, and when I would get to him, he'd start running again. After awhile he got tired and I was able to put the leash on him and go home. He is a good dog and I miss that dog. I can't wait to get home to see him.

-Luis

From The Beat: Thanks for finishing your story Luis. We hope you get to see Buddy soon.

Dream Vacation

Well my dream vacation is to go Amsterdam. Then I would take all my brothers and we would chill and drink and smoke some mary jane. But ya I'll just post all day with my brothers. One love.

-Lil' Todo

From The Beat: Dream vacations are about having a good time, and it sounds like that's what you want to do, but before you get there you'll need some get right, or you'll never have any kind of decent vacation.

My Mom and Me

Well the only advice I got in my life was from my mom. She would always tell me that getting locked up was not fun. She told that because she was in prison before, and she didn't like it because they told you what to do all the time.

I wouldn't care what she said, and now here I am locked up and I don't like it because they have to tell me what to do all the time!

I think I should take my mom's advice.

-Garcia

From The Beat: Well they say "Mom knows best" and I guess this time they're right. Your mom managed to get herself out of the cycle of being locked up. Do you think what you've learned in juvy will help you follow her example now?

My Dream Vacation To Alaska

There is one place I have always dreamt of going - Alaska. Hunting has always been one of my hobbies and from what I've read and heard, Alaska is the premier destination for big game hunting. Giant elk, moose, and even bear roam the wilds of Alaska's vast landscape. I would love, just once, to look down the sight of my Remington and line up the cross hairs on an enormous moose, and take him down. Alaska is the kind of beauty I would truly like to visit one day.

-Dylan

From The Beat: We've heard that Alaska is as beautiful as you say. We are curious, though, why you are so interested in killing one of the creatures that makes Alaska so beautiful. Why kill a defenseless animal? Where's the 'sport' in that? By the way, you are a very good writer.

Anywhere But Here

A dream vacation for me is anywhere but here, somewhere where I can be with my lady, my family and my homeboys from my 'hood. We are just kicking back probably throwing around the old pig skin, and sipping back on grandpa's old cough medicine just getting faded and having a great time, as on big familia.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: Even though you say "anywhere but here," you really have a clear picture, and a very sweet one, of where you'd rather be and what you'd rather be doing.

Dream Vacation

My dream vacation is Vietnam, because I was born over there. I've heard really great things about Vietnam and how it has changed. I am thinking about going back to my country in two years. When I get there the first thing I'm going to do is get some food, because the food there is great.

- Vietnamese

From The Beat: Most of us are curious about where we came from. Do you speak Vietnamese? Will you visit relatives? Will you visit the town where you were born? Travel is great for the soul. Take care of business here, and then see the world.

Thinking Of A Better Life

When I am in jail I think what I could do better not to get caught.

I also think about all my problems and I go crazy, I get mad and do push ups, try to rap, read the Bible.

Then the staff wants to jack with my head, but sometimes my brotha say it will be alright.

Just don't trip you will get out soon, sometimes I try to think about positive things, but people make me mad then I say screw it you can't think positive in jail

because then people think you are a girl.

Then you have to fight or something, but I am a beast in here.

It ain't no place for nobody and if you think I am lying come and you will see.

-Joseph

From the Beat: You're not ready to change Joseph, because you start your piece off with thinking of ways not to get caught. You continue to go on about thinking positive, but then in the end you're saying the heck with it. Why, because you don't want people to think you're a "B". That is where you're wrong, think positive, stop committing crimes and it won't make any difference what people think. Feel good and positive about what you do and think, that'll be the best feeling you could have.

Thinking About Family

Being in here is making me think about my brother and my family. Being in here with out my family or getting to see them accept for the thirty-minutes a week sucks. Because they give me and my brother thirty-minutes each to see my family. We both don't get the full hour, were supposed to be getting.

I've been in here for three months already, and I can't stop thinking about my family and being outside with the homies. Being on the outs is crazy because I would get shot at a lot, and that sucks. Me and my oldest brother used to shoot too. That got old, and now me and my brother are locked up for some dumb shhh.

- Julian

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear that you only get a visit for thirty-minutes, but you must make the best of what you can with what you have. Did you and your brother get put in lock up for the same thing? How do you think your mother feels about both her son's being locked up at the same time? Who is the older you or your brother? From the sounds of it you and your brother are lucky to be alive.

Thinking out side the box

I dream I'm on an Island but with lots of buildings

There are a lot of good ghetto children

The place looks bad but with good people

Why people don't care about this place?

There are a lot of different people but mainly one race

Why no help it's as if we are extinct

To this one race this place is beautiful

But people seem to differ

Why are U scared of this place we call home?

We have dreams that don't come true

The dreams we have always happen to U

We rise up and rise together

To be destroyed by Mother Nature or politics

This place is wonderful even with crime and trash

We are good we are bright, we are talented but to U

We are jus a thing in the past

-Reggie

From the Beat: Once again Reggie another outstanding piece. Your writings are true and from the heart, continue writing, make a difference with your life. Let people hear your voice maybe people will see your Island in a different light.

Thinking While Locked Up

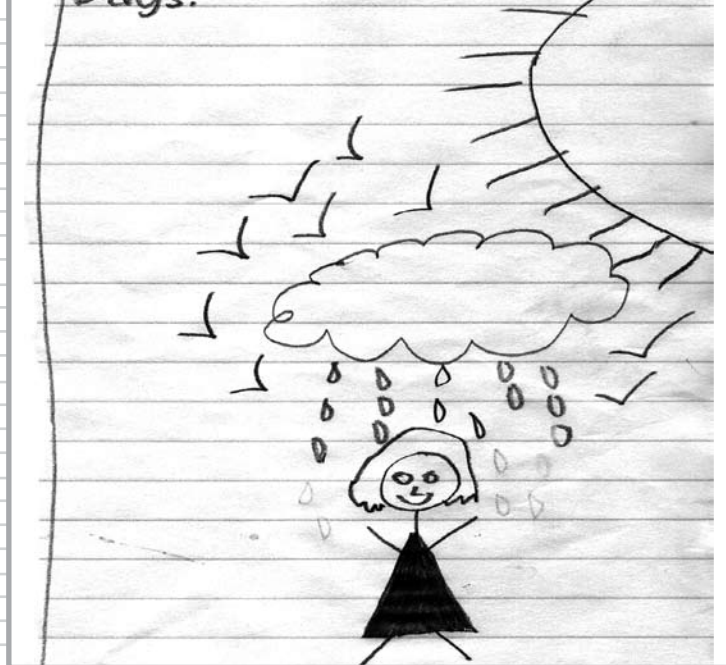
I think of a lot of things when I'm locked up, so when I lay down I think of if I am ever going to get out and if any body cares about my feelings.

It's my fault no one has the fault that I am here, but I wish I was not here and out in the streets. It's my fault that I am here I think of my family and specially my mom. I love my mom and I feel guilty because I am here and there out there. Now that I think of it and I don't know what's going through my mind.

- Nau

From The Beat: Nau, two key points, first you have recognized that it was, you, that put yourself in jail not some one else. That's a good start; now find a way to stay out of lock up, so you can be with your mom that way you'll never have to feel guilty for doing what you do in life. Make your mother proud of whom you are; don't let her be one to stand at your funeral.

Some people always
have a cloud hovering over
them even on the brightest
Days.



She's on my mind

When I'm in my room, I think about a lot of stuff. Mainly about my daughter I just always thing about how big she is getting and sometimes I think that by the time I get out she won't remember me.

Last night I talked to her and it made me really think a lot, she asked me when I was coming home. That shhh killed me because I don't even have an answer for her, so basically I am always thinking about her.

Once in a while I think about what I can do when I get out like what kind of job I want.

We'll I'm out.

-KuruptOne

From The Beat: Why didn't you finish your story? You left us hanging wondering about your daughter, how old is she? Where does she live now? It's easy to say "I'm a parent", but another to be a parent. You need to set your priorities straight and take care of your daughter before, as you say "She won't remember me". Continue the path you're on and she won't remember you.

What I See Where I Live

On my block, I see kids on the corner; hanging-out when they should be in school.

On my block, I see kids making problems when they can be making Honor Roll.

On my block I see kids playing with guns when they can be playing football.

On my block I see more kids dying every day; but hope one day that all these things will stop because my little brother lives on that block.

-Travis

From The Beat: Unfortunately there are many kids out there who are wasting the talents and abilities they have. What about you? Are you throwing away opportunities to develop your own talents for a lifestyle that will betray you in the end? What you see where you live doesn't have to be what you live. What will you do differently so as not to live what you see?

How?

How can I maintain with hurt in my brain?

How can I move on when my body ain't so strong?

How can I stand up when I've fallen to my knees?

How can I see thing when I'm blinded by lies?

How can I have hope when it's all taken away?

How can I live if there ain't nothin' to give?

I just have to try...

Til the day that my soul dies.

-Oscar

From The Beat: You have brought up some very good questions that many of your peers have probably also asked themselves. One answer that we will offer is that you do not have to struggle alone. Lean on the support of positive people around you to help you when you feel like you can no longer go on. Although a bad situation or circumstance may seem like it will last forever, change will come. The time spent in detention can be helpful if you allow yourself to reflect and set goals. Have you allowed yourself to reflect and set goals? Make sure you do your part to make the best choices for yourself, and things will change. Don't ever give up!

I think another way is to follow your parent's rules and think before you do anything. You will need support from your family and close friends.

Behind These Walls

I cried at night like a baby would for its mother.

I was such a sad clown.

Just like a giant storm waiting for the raindrops and moisture to fall down.

Splish Splash!!

Went my teardrops sky diving through the air.

I felt as if nobody even cared.

The tears tore through the tempered expression as I sat behind these walls with time as my only possession.

- Michelle

From The Beat: It's great that you can express your feelings and you did a good job writing everything out in detail. We know sometimes that expression is all you need to feel better. Always remember that someone out there cares and always remember what you felt when you were put behind those walls; maybe that memory will help keep you from going back to detention. And in planning to not spend time locked up one also needs to care and respect one's self. We hope your tears do not fall in vain.

Exit Strategy

Everyone has problems, and most everyone wants to find a way that will help them get out of them.

I have problems and I want to get out of them, and I think there are many ways of helping. One way is to choose who your friends really are. Your friends will help you get into trouble; but won't be there to help you get out.

Also, I think another way is to follow your parent's rules and think before you do anything. You will need support from your family and close friends.

Also, you will need someone to talk with that will understand you and your problems. I also think that if you are going to do something, you need to think of the consequences and reasons why you shouldn't do it.

-Samantha

From The Beat: You hit the nail right on the head! Your strategy is practically perfect. All you need now is to act out your plan because "people may doubt what you say, but they'll always believe what you do". Your plan regarding friends and family is great. In addition to what you mentioned, remember that "other things may change, but we start and end with family".

I think visiting is the most important thing to me and I'm going to tell you why. The reason is because you get to see the people that you always need to be seeing everyday.

What's Worse?

My block is where the drug dealers stand on the corner slinging to the hopeless crack heads-just to try to make a living. To help themselves while killing others-even the young-who may have a bright future. I don't know what's worse; having gangs on your block shooting and killing or crack heads and drug dealers. Either way, someone is killing or ruining their lives.

-James

From The Beat: You might not realize but you answered your own questions. They're both at the same level because...you said it "either way, someone is killing or ruining their life". The bright thing to do would be to get out of that block, but if that's not possible, what are you going to do to make sure your life isn't ruined or ended? Sometimes we can't choose where we live but we can choose how we live. What will your choices be?

Visit Me-It Means A Lot

Well if you ask me, I think visiting is the most important thing to me and I'm going to tell you why. The reason is because you get to see the people that you always need to be seeing everyday. Just the other day, my mom came to see me for the first time. I didn't even sit down and already began to cry. The reason why is because I hated my mom to see me in this place. You get to hear about what's going-on outside detention. You can get a hug and kiss-that's the best part. So that's the most important thing to me.

-Jacob

From The Beat: It's okay to cry. It's actually a very good thing that you cried and we agree that seeing family every day is important, especially if your family is a positive influence. Did you put a high value in seeing family before you came into detention? What are you going to do to make sure your mom doesn't see you in detention again? How much time did you spend with your family when you were on the outs? Did you go to your family when you had obstacles to overcome? Could your family rely on you, as well? Now is a really good time to evaluate those things that are most important.

Locked Up-Need To See You

To me, the most important thing while being locked-up is having my family come to visit me-even though it hurts them seeing me locked-up. Why, because you really can't do nothing or what you want. When you hear a voice of one of your loved ones, it makes you feel good-because you know that they are O.K. And they know that you are O.K. When my family sees me, I let them know what's going-on and when I know what's going-on; it's like I'm out. But I can't do nothing. But it's better to know what's going-on than to not know and be stressed-out.

Being stressed-out makes you feel like you don't want to deal with life anymore. But you always tell yourself to keep your head up; that you can do it! Tomorrow is another day. Just wait, something good will come one day. It's just a hump in the road that you can get over.

-Aaron

From The Beat: Believe it or not, every one of us has obstacles that we need to overcome but we overcome them by staying positive. Yes, sometimes we have to wait it out and let the good things come, but most of the time we have to act and make good decisions which will greatly reduce the amount of humps in the road ahead.

Locked Up-Need To Hear From You

Letters, because with visits, you only get an hour. But at least you could see them in person. But I only get to see my mom and with phone calls, the most time you get is 10 minutes; once a week if your good. Sometimes my mom isn't even there. But with letters, you can write anyone and get pics and talk as long as how many pages you get.

-David

From The Beat: When you are separated from family and friends, what we refer to as snail mail takes on a whole new meaning, huh!? We encourage you to find ways to express your heart to those you love in your letters. We challenge you to be sure to follow up what you write with your actions when you get released. We care and spend time with the people we care the most for. Who will you be spending your time with when you're released?

When I Cry

When I cry I always catch my tears in my hand
I don't let my tears touch the floor
cause when a tear drops hits the ground a dream is broken
and no matter how hard things get I will never let
anything break me down
or crush my soul...

-Oscar

From The Beat: Many thing break dreams. Maybe "tears on the ground" do; maybe they don't. Are you doing everything you need to do to make sure your dreams aren't broken besides "catching your tears"? You said you'll never let anything break you down; does that include bad choices, drugs, gangs, violence, and wasted time in jail?

To me, the most important thing while being locked-up is having my family come to visit me-even though it hurts them seeing me locked-up.

Satan

If you can see it
It can see you
Watch what you do
He watches every move you make
He wants only one mistake
That all it takes
He doesn't want to give you any chances
He doesn't want you to get strong
He wants to put you down your whole life
And make you feel like you don't belong
Even though you can't see him by sight
But you can hear him come out late at night
But when you see him you don't know
That it's him
Because he's hidden deep within
He doesn't want me to flow
He doesn't want me to rap
He wants me to follow his words
And fall in his trap
He gives you a map and tells you that's the way to go
And where does it lead to? It's straight down below
They say if you see him with your own eyes
You will die. Is that a lie?
You ask me and I'll ask why?

- Estephen

From The Beat: There's always going to be someone telling you that you can't succeed. What people say about you is not what holds you down or holds you back though. It's what you say to yourself about you that keep you back or off-track...that little voice in the back of your mind. What are you saying about you? The truth is, you can succeed, but you have to be careful which voices you are listening to. Will you listen to your peers? Your parents? Your teachers? The media? Take advice from wise people and you will go far!

*Dear Mama,
you're always on my mind
You're never left behind*

Dear Mama

Dear Mama, please don't cry
Everything's going to be alright
I remember back when I was young and dumb
When we used to argue and fight
You've been through so much; it just wasn't right
I always think of you every night

Dear Mama, you're always on my mind
You're never left behind

Dear Mama, I know it's been hard for you ever since you
were a little girl
You've been tortured by this crazy world.

Dear Mama, sorry for the drama and pain.
I wish I could take back all those sad years
And stop you from shedding all those tears.

-Estephen

From The Beat: Your love for your mother obviously runs deep, Estephen, but it also sounds like there is pain. We imagine that the gang life and drugs have been strong magnets to draw you away from the pain and loneliness. Unfortunately both gangs and drugs are only temporary solutions to your pain and actually bring you more pain and regret. Is it possible to work through your pain and allow the love you feel to motivate you to make more positive choices? To begin to work through that pain someone you trust would be helpful. Who do you trust?

Once Again

I'm back again, in the hall. Same old thing – wasting my precious time because I decided to run from my program. And the court is giving me another chance. They're sending me to ranch camp. I'm going to do this simple time and be done. I'm surprised I'm not going to CYA. But the judge is letting me go to ranch again. That's a sign right there that I need to stop being dumb and get this time done with, so I can be back with my family.

-Kevin

From The Beat: You are getting a break. Be grateful for it and get your act together. Have you asked yourself what you really want? What are your dreams? And we don't mean to be a tight end, or a forward on The Warriors. We mean, what kind of a human being would you like to be? What do you like to do? What are you pretty good at? Start writing your hopes and dreams on paper. And then begin to figure out how to make them come true. No doubt, a realistic answer involves a decent education. Get busy Kevin.

An Interview

Q: What's your name?

A: Albert

Q: Where you from?

A: Watsonville.

Q: How old are you?

A: I just turned 16.

Q: We understand that you have trouble reading and writing. Why is that?

A: My mom did a lot of drugs. I was a drug baby. My mom told the school about me. They pretty much ignored her and didn't take it seriously. They'd give me homework and let me pass through the grades. I told them I wanted to learn how to read and write, but pretty much they kept on doing what they were doing. My mom's been clean and sober for a long time and she's hired an investigator who knows my problems. His name is John, and he's had reading and writing problems, too. Now he knows how to do that, but he knows what I'm going through.

Q: What's the next step for you?

A: I'll be going to Santa Cruz with four other kids for three hours of reading and two hours of writing a day. It was set up by the probation department.

Q: So, in a way, it's almost lucky that you got locked up....

A: Not really, 'cause I don't like being locked up. I miss my family. But it's great that probation is helping.

Q: Are you looking forward to those classes?

A: Yes, because I'll be happier.

-Albert

From The Beat: All the best with the educational support. You will definitely be happier.

The Worst Advice

The worst advice that I ever took was when my brother urged me to go a rob a lady's house, because he thought she had a lot of ferria. It turned out that there was no money in the house and I got arrested. On top of that, my jefa was ticked off at me. I took the fall and never told anyone, even though I felt 'used'. I was only 12 or 13 at the time. Now I listen to good advice and especially don't listen to my brother anymore. That decision surely wasn't worth it in the long run, even though I knew what I was doing.

-Kaisha

From The Beat: That was terrible advice. We hope your brother learned something from that experience, and that you did, too. Your decision wasn't worth it in the short run or the long run. It was plain wrong. Stick with the good advice.

The Beat Goes On

I went to court recently and received a 'court commit', which means I do my time here in the hall – which isn't that bad. I know there are some staff here that want to help us. The bad thing is I have to stay here until I'm 18. If I'm good, I could get released early.

-Buddha

From The Beat: Well then, you better be good.

In A Cage

I've been in a cage for months for doing dirt on the streets, but I'm OK.

I'm not plastic.

I'm for real.

When I get out everybody will see me as a hero.

-Juan

From The Beat: Hey, do you want to be seen as a hero for doing things that get you locked up? We're hoping that your down time will give you a chance to figure out what's really important in life. "Doing dirt on the streets" doesn't qualify, in our book, as a good way to spend your time and energy. Bad things happen, and you lose your freedom. Is that good?

My Son

I'll get out in about six months, but this was a very good week for me because my son was born last week and this week I got to a picture of him. It's sad that I had to meet him through a picture. But soon he will be brought here to the hall for me to see him. I can't wait. Well, that's it, for now.

-Jordan

From The Beat: That's exciting Jordan. If you ever find yourself wondering what life's all about, just look at your son's photo. And wonder no more.

I was a drug baby. My mom told the school about me. They pretty much ignored her and didn't take it seriously.

How It Is

I love my family a lot. I feel like I'm inside a box with memories of me and my homies. I never listened to advice. I wish I could take a vacation from reality. I'm stuck in this dream that's a nightmare. All I have is time. I love the streets, but I have to fight temptation. The choice is mine. By the way, I'm a great reader.

-K

From The Beat: And we have a long list of great things for you to read. Are you ready for it?

Yesterday's Whisper

To be a hero in a garden of ghosts is lame, is a destiny filled with dirt.

To hunger for junk is not the key to justice.

Now there is a mild kiss on the milestone of a mistake, a nest of opportunity.

While incarcerated I hold a secret deep in my voice.

No one can hear yesterday's whisper.

-Nathaniel

From The Beat: This is a fascinating poem Nathaniel. It's instructive, but also mysterious. We love the images you've conjured. Keep writing. You're on to something.

What Might Have Been

I
I fear what is to come,
It is there, always there,
Waiting, waiting for me,
But I cannot see its features,
There, in the distance,
It's coming closer!

II
I run along this barren land,
Yet I cannot escape
"Why?" I cry back "Why?"
It stops, so do I
I turn to face it,
He pulls back his hood,
His face is twisted with pain

III
I say to him, or me really,
"Why do you hurt me?"
He responds, his voice hacked with tremors
You made me who I am
Your fear made you strange
It destroyed your relationships.
It broke you.

IV
"I'm so sorry" I say
"How can I change this?"
He steps forward,
I whine
"Why are you afraid of me?
Of yourself?" he says
"I fear what I can't control." I say
"Then fear not" he steps forward again.

V
"Master yourself" he says
"Pain is no obstacle
Only a fool knows no fear,
A hero simply shows no fear,
Strengthen yourself through your pain,
Learn from the pain your errors cause you"

VI
"Your future holds nothing over you"
That is what he said as he turned
Then pulling up his hood he vanished

VII
From then on I pledged to live,
Live as that future not routed to live,
Living for those who cannot live it
Helping those who couldn't help themselves
And loving those who know no love,
With this I raised my spirit
Up from the depths of the darkness
Put on a new robe
And walked out into the world
A changed man
Thanks
Praise be to my guardian,
The archangel Michael,
And that which has cleansed me
The archangel Gabriel
And the sovereign Lord
May his will be done
Blessed be all who care for others

-Angel Fire

From the Beat: Your poem is part self-reflection and part prayer. Well done. Yet even though the subject is the two yous facing each other, you continue to camouflage yourself behind "hoods" and "robes." Even your title hides more than it reveals. What has led you from the hooded person you were to the newly robed person you are? Is it a new faith in God and angels, or did that new faith come after the inner transition? You can tell us so much more, both because you know much more and because you have the ability to write it.

Wake Up From This Nightmare

Fallen dreams
That's what it all seems
Got kids crying
Moms prostituting their own
The streets get more corrupted
By the seconds, minutes, hours
All of dis living hell
They want each and every young soul
The system is building more prisons
And we got homeless kids needing schools
Priests trying to reach out to all Gods, daughters and sons
News keeps steady reporting bad news
Broadcasting murders, robberies and much more
Glorifying this battle we are not meant to win
Ya' don't seem to understand
The system was invented by the wicked man
Inflicted by them they love to see us fail
They love typing your name up sending it in the mail
Letting your mom know you're another lost soul
Lost your life to this game
As we got young kids looking for love
In all the wrong places going ground in all these sinful mazes
Giving their life up for a street, a color
This mess ain't even funny
The government is getting richer
Collecting our crumbs or money
As the cops ain't playing, sentencing
All our Latinos, blacks, whites to a life sentence
Open your eyes
You're only hustling your own
Got little girls selling themselves for
A plate to eat, a room to sleep
Young boys risking their freedom
Selling dope on every street corner
Dis seems too crazy to acknowledge
But it's beauty
Dis stuff makes me so mad
We are young as they steady charge us as adults
Crooked cops taking us to jail
Drop a dirty .22 and you gone
Pelican Bay, San Quentin, Chowchilla and plenty more
It's a shame to see all these lost lives
Instead of guiding us to education
They guide us to a danger zone full of hate
They make you an object as soon as they label you a number
That's reality
Got kids all around smoking that crystal
Got our young kids doing their dirty work
Losing their childhood as the country sits back and enjoys the ride
Of seeing us behind bars
Fiending for that drug
The government is so dirty
Setting you up for major tragedy
Your lives are so fragile
Let's wake up from this nightmare.

-Giggles

From the Beat: The writing packs a punch. One image after another, each its own, yet all inter-related. How do we get people (inside and out) to wake up to the nightmare you describe where everything leads towards the same end, more lives lost to the streets or the penitentiary?

If These Walls Could Talk

If these walls could talk, they would have a lot to say. They would say that many people come and go. They would also say that some people come back over and over. They would say that many people say they are gonna' change but they don't. The walls would say many people are just saying things to get by.

But once in a while, someone comes that actually wants to change. The walls would say to go out and never come back. If the walls could talk, I would ask for advice on how to change my ways. . . and never talk to them again.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Use what you observe day in and day out, add your imagination and let us know what you think those walls would say. What advice do you think they would give you?

Through My Shoes

If people can walk through my shoes, they would understand my struggles—growing up a Chicano and being broke, being harassed everywhere you go because of the way you look, having to fight for your respect in the streets. Being pushed to where you snap and you have too much pride to say you're sorry and regret what you have done. Having to rely on no one but your closest homies, going home to problems and arguments. The only thing I seem to understand is the bottle next to me. But people who see me different wouldn't make it in my shoes.

-Nacho

From The Beat: You're definitely right that you have demonstrated great strength by what you've had to accommodate. In a very brief way, you have described the social problems of poverty and racism as well as a personal problem of pride. If we have anything to add, it's this: Examine very carefully what you say you understand — the bottle next to you. That bottle has a way of twisting things to make you think you understand things that defy understanding. Don't poison that sharp and focused brain of yours through a fog of alcohol.

If the walls could talk I would ask for advice on how to change my ways, and never talk to them again.

I'm Tired

I'm tired of running from the cops,
Tired of hopping the fences.
I'm tired of getting' caught up,
Tired of dealing wit' consequences.
I'm tired of being locked up,
Tired of being in a cold cell.
I'm tired of being in the system,
Tired of living like hell.
Now it's time for me to change,
And start living a new life.
Time to start off fresh,
And seek me a wife,
Time to look for a job,
And get myself hired.
It's time to change mi vida,
All because I'm tired.

-Mousie

From the Beat: We believe you. You're tired... and isn't it about time? We applaud your goals for the future, and hope finishing school is also a part of them. The job market can be hard on young people. However students have the advantage not only of gaining an education but also accessing good jobs.

WEEKLY • WRITINGS

Do My Thang To Stay Out

What's good with The Beat? Man, I'm mad that I'm back in jail. It seems like I was just on the block with the goons and we was having fun getting' money, just doin' our thang. But I think about that every day. When I touch down, I'm go do my thang to stay out, but that's all I had to say to The Beat. I'm out.

-Smoke Ya Dig

From The Beat: You didn't tell us much in this piece. Like, could you add a few details to what it means to "do my thang to stay out." What will you really do to stay out, and can you make the changes necessary to pull it off?

Free Write

While in juvenile hall, I've thought a lot about my past and my future. I've thought about a lot of mistakes I've made that could've been prevented, but just 'cause I was on and was around my goons, decided to strip somebody of their belongings, or decided to sell that sack of cream because of fast money and wanting what the next ninja had.

But feel me, when I get out, my mind set is going to be different. It's going to be set on going to school, finding females, and easy money like getting a job to keep my PO off my back. Maybe on the weekends get a little extra money but nothing too serious to end up in here. That's definitely where I don't want to be.

-G-Speedo

From The Beat: We can't be sure you definitely don't want to be here if you're still thinking about making that extra money on the weekends, because nobody in that lane ever thinks it's going to result in getting caught up. Concentrate on those fine goals you've set for yourself that you know lead to a better future, and leave the fast money for the suckers who live lavish for a minute, then find themselves confined with a bunch of other men taking orders from strangers.

You Think You Know Me?

The judge thinks he knows me 'cause he reads pages full of negatives, pages that say I smoked weed and skipped school.

He probably thinks that I'll be repetitive.

You might think I'm just another inmate but I'm not.

I'm a straight-A football player,

and a future state champ wrestler.

The only thing that's holding me back is this grimy jail.

As soon as I step out, I'm doing life the model-male way.

I'm going to school, get a job and listen to mom.

-Nash The Mistro

From The Beat: Remember the things that led you to "this grimy jail" so that they don't become the things that hold you back. Definitely finish school because education is the key to a better future.

The Greatest Thing That Nobody Knows About Me

Something that nobody knows about me is that I race motorcycles and I'm number two in the nation on 250's. I don't like to talk about it because nobody really knows anything about racing or motorcycles and if I tell them that I'm number two in the nation, they will think that I'm lying. I've been racing since I was four years old and I've been to several different states like Washington, Florida, Illinois and Ohio.

-Patrick

From the Beat: Sounds like you have a lot going for you in your life. You've allowed yourself to get sidetracked by coming here. When you get out, don't get thrown off by anything, or anyone that can get you locked up.

Fire And Ice

Heart of fire
Mind of ice
Phoenix, wandering in the night,
Find your chosen one tonight,
Your angel, waiting is she,
Hurry, hurry, and do not wait
You are losing her to her fate,
But whatever should happen
It be the will of he on most high
But wait; there is your angel,
By surrendering to fate,
You freed yourself from hate,
Now moving achieved what you wanted most,
Embraced your angel
And watch over her while she sleeps

-Angel Fire

From The Beat: You definitely have a gift for poetic words, young writer of the ever-changing-name, but your poems reveal nothing about yourself and the journey that has led you to here and will lead you from here. Do you know the poem "Fire And Ice" by the American poet Robert Frost? We'd love your analysis of its meaning. It goes like this: "Some say the world will end in fire,/Some say in ice./From what I've tasted of desire/I hold with those who favor fire./But if it had to perish twice,/I think I know enough of hate/To say that for destruction ice/is also great/And would suffice."

Sorry

Sorry I'm a bad guy,
Sorry I don't know why,
Sorry if I ever lied,
Sorry 'cause I did a crime,
Sorry 'cause I'm doing time,
Sorry 'cause I'm not there,
Sorry 'cause I didn't care,
Sorry 'cause I'm insane,
Sorry if you went through pain,
Sorry 'cause I acted tough,
Sorry if words ain't enough,
Sorry 'cause I'm here awhile,
Baby girl you know I miss your smile

-Mousie

From The Beat: We can feel your sadness in this list of regrets, Mousie. The only question is whether your sorrow for hurting her and yourself will carry you through this bad situation into a better future where you don't have to be sorry.

That Advice

The worst advice I have taken was from a friend. The advice he gave me was about drugs. He told me that poppin' and smokin' was one of the best things you could do. But he didn't tell me how it ends up putting you on the wrong track. I started smokin' and poppin' during my 10th grade year and it led me to always ditching school. It also led me to getting hella' bad grades and having problems with my family. I also ended up doing a lot of dirt and getting away with it until I got caught and sent here to Hillcrest.

-Tyler

From The Beat: Keeping it real, do you think if someone had told you all the negative consequences that come from poppin' pills, you would not have done it? Whatever your answer, it's obvious you've learned the lessons the hard way. Will those hard lessons be enough to keep you from going back to your old ways?

These Walls

If these walls could talk they would talk about our struggles. My pops is sick and I'm up in here. I could have been out there, but I had to have a beer. Hopefully he doesn't die while I'm locked up.

-Mayorga

From The Beat: We hope your pops is all right. And we also hope you've learned a really important lesson, and that is that sometimes we need to put aside what we want right now for something that we want even more in the long run.

The walls In My Room

If the walls in my room could talk, they would tell you that I'm really bored in my room and mostly sleep and read a lot of books to make time fly.

-Eduardo

From the Beat: Tell us more. Use The Beat to overcome boredom by telling stories, revealing things that readers may not know, exploring your imagination. We gave you an hour, and all you gave us was one sentence! No wonder you're bored. What kind of books are you reading? What do you dream about when you sleep? What advice would you give us on how to deal with being locked up?

In da' Walls

In da' walls people hate
In da' walls people regret what happened
In da' walls, people tell stories, lose battles
In da' walls, you see turfs from San Francisco to San Jose
In da' walls you hear da' most common phrase
"Damn! I'm locked up."

-H

From the Beat: It seems as if so much of what goes on in Juvenile Hall just repeats itself from generation to generation. That common phrase suggests that people are surprised when they get caught up. That worries us because there are even worse surprises down the line if they continue doing what got them here.

The Past Is Always There

When I think outside the box, I think of all the times that were good in my life. Like when my family was actually a family. When we had love for each other. But sometimes we had the bad times as well, where we didn't even talk. Thinking outside the box is hard because sometimes you start to think about bad things that happened in your life that you want to put past you but it is always there.

-Nile

From the Beat: What do you do when good thoughts begin to veer towards the bad? Do you move on to other memories? Better memories? Or do you wrestle with the ones that bother you? What changes do you foresee so that your future memories will be more good than bad?

When I Hate

When I hate, it's because I'm mad at someone and I don't know how to take my anger out. I also hate if I know the person is hatin' on me too. When people hate on me, I feel frustrated because I know they are just jealous.

-Cynthia

From the Beat: Finding a healthy outlet for anger is vital for keeping hatred out of yourself. Some find it in sports, others in music and art. The Beat Within urges its contributors and readers to use writing as an outlet.

Thinking About The New Me

When I think outside the box, I think about me on the outs. I don't think about the old me, but the new me--the things I'm gonna' change and the things I have to do. I think about the me on the outs with a job. I think about me helping my family. I also think about me drug free.

I'm gonna' be eighteen when I leave and I'm gonna be a free man. I'm not gonna' be on probation. I have to start a better life for myself because my old life wasn't working. That's what I think when I think outside the box.

-Smokey

From the Beat: What do you want do with yourself when you're eighteen and on the outs? Do you want to get a job? Go to school? Both? Believe it or not, there are many places and many programs on the outs that can help you achieve your goals — if you know what they are. It won't be easy, but it can't be any harder than doing time.

Someone After Me

Your black, cold eyes follow me
Denying my very existence
Is it my body that your heart pretends to violate,
My precious thoughts...
Or are you jealous of my high self esteem?
Would it please you if I lowered my standards and my expectations
My morals or my capabilities?
What is it that you want of me?
To try and boost your own self-esteem
Because you are too weak to build a strong foundation
To carry out your own inner dreams!
Do you call yourself the woman/man
When you continue to downplay each and every individual
That comes your way?
Or could it be the small boy/girl tucked deep inside of that
Grown body lashing out just hoping and praying someone will cast her/him out?
I see through the hardened shell
It is no longer you but the spirit of the one who comes directly from hell!
Maybe after all it is not you who's after me but the evil chameleon fronting to be...
Someone is after me!

-Mackin'

From the Beat: Could it be that you've been chasing your own tail... that you are the one who's after you? We don't know who you are addressing in this poem, but we hope you don't allow the views of someone else to determine who you can be and what you can accomplish!

When Our Homies Fall

When my homies fall
 Grace of tears and hatred are discovered
 Exposed of pain are magnified
 The greatest pain discovered
 My homies taught me to be strong
 But I'm confused to see the homies' Mom
 So weak and sad to give up a son...
 But never give up
 It hurts to see your homies fall
 Just like a drop of rain
 Without my homies there is only hatred
 And for me to be alone to deal with this sorrow of madness
 But my soul is not happy at all
 What are the homies expected to do
 When my homies fall or when your homies fall?

-Rambo

From The Beat: We appreciate the intensity of this piece, the passion that drives such hatred. And, in truth, we cannot answer your question for you, what are you expected to do? All we know is that the easy answer — get revenge — hasn't been working for anyone. More and more young men, mostly black and brown, are being snatched from their families and communities to end up in the ground or in places like this. That's how we know it's not working. There must be a better way.

Racing to Help Grandma

Something that nobody knows about me is that I like to race cars (because it's my favorite sport) and help other people that have disabilities, like my Grandmother. She can't move so I have to help her do things.

-Luis

From the Beat: Tell us about your grandmother. How old is she and how do you feel taking care of her? Are there others besides your grandmother that you have helped? How can you help yourself to stay out of here?

If I Were A Rich Man

When I get rich, I'm going to buy everything as houses to cars and everything else I want to put in my tank. Also, I could kill people and get out of jail. Or, I would build some schools for people all over the world can get education. And I would have you working at your own pace. Also I would let you go to college. If you just go to high school for four years and you don't have to pass, that's easy.

-Doshua

From The Beat: Why do you want to kill people? Maybe if you were rich, you'd be having such a good time, you'd forget about the need to hurt anyone else. On the other hand, we love your idea about schools and education for everyone!

My Life

My struggles, my vida (life), my bandana, my gang,
 I often pray to drift away on a memory.
 I'm stuck in a cold cell with bad dreams,
 Through these brown eyes I've seen death,
 And done everything a hustler has done.
 I'm young but I'm a slave to prison walls,
 But esto es mi vida (this is my life).
 I've lost hope in the present and for tomorrow.
 But with my head held high to the sky,
 I'm praying for a better day,
 I'm living that gangster dream.

-Rambo

From The Beat: Actually, you're currently living the nightmare part of "that gangster dream." And the sad part is that you seem to have accepted that state prison is a part of what you're facing. We feel your powerful loyalty to your gang and what it stands for, but when it's not the gang but the individual who pays the price — and when you're the individual — we have to wonder if you're leading yourself into one of those tragic "if only" situations that you will not be able to change.

Can't Wait To Get Out

I miss my mom
 I'm missin' my dad
 My little sister
 My baby brother
 Without them there's no one to bother
 I need to rise to the occasion
 'Cause in my family, I'm the big brother
 I miss my baby girl
 Without her love
 All I see is a dove
 Flying with her name above
 My life right now is nothing but a game
 I wanna' change and rearrange all the rage
 I just wanna' get out of jail

-Neil

From The Beat: Of course you must get out and be the big brother your younger siblings need. When you get out, whenever you're tempted to do things that you wouldn't want them to do, remember that it's what you do they'll be following and not what you tell them to do.

If my Walls Could Talk

If my walls could talk, the first thing these walls would ask me is "Why are you here?" The second is "How long are you doing here?" They would also ask me, "Will I ever grow up in life? Will I ever change and do right? Was it worth what you did, to be here with me, every day and every night?"

-Skimpy

From the Beat: Is it the walls that are posing these questions or your own conscience? What other questions do you ask yourself, and what answers are you finding?

Can't Be Sneezing

There's nothing nice coming up in a world of so much hatred, violence and pain.
 It's a cruel world so anything you ever dreamed of doing goes down the drain.
 It's insane how much there is to lose and how little to gain.
 But still knowing this, I put myself frontline in the game.
 "Why?" you ask me, well listen close and I'll tell you the reason.
 I love this way of life so I'm bang hard for all seasons.
 I can't be sneezing, 'cause I might miss something and my rivals'll be cheesing.
 Talking about "that fool's lucky his boys were there or else he wouldn't be breathing."
 So many times I've been in a situation where I had to do something scandalous and cruel.
 I don't dare tell you what I did, but what I did kept it neutral.
 Gotta' watch my back for those that are out to get me.
 Gotta' watch my back for these fools that don't respect me.

-Wolfgang

From the Beat: While we admire the honesty of your writing, we still don't know what it is that you love about the game? Spell it out. What does it give you besides the threats to your life, the grief and the time spent in a cell? Is it the adrenaline rush of the moment, or a family creed of some kind? In other words, to us it's clear that you have a first-rate mind which means you can't pretend you don't know the likely consequences of your choices. So what we hope you can make us understand is why you would risk everything for whatever it is that keeps you in the game.

Two Lovers

I got two lovers and I love them both the same
 Let me tell you about my first lover
 She treats me nice, makes me smile
 But I still can't deny that I love her
 Let me tell you about my second lover
 She treats me bad,
 Makes me sad,
 Makes me cry,
 But I still can't deny
 That I love her
 I really, really love her.
 I love them both because they are the same.

-Lil' Stranger

From the beat: Is this a real person you're writing about? Or are you making a larger point that we are all both good and bad at different times, and that we all have the potential for good and for bad?

A Hustler's Ambition

Hustlers are addicted not to the money, but the rush of getting the money. It's the kind of thing where you can experience a near death and if you're lucky enough to survive, the urge to get back in the game rises up stronger than ever. Your mind will have you rationalizing all of the mistakes you made in the game and how you are going to do it differently this time. Nothing takes away this ambition of a hustler but time and pain.

-McGee

From the Beat: This is a good start and is something you should continue to work on. This begins to answer the question that anyone who isn't a hustler would ask, which is: what makes it worth it, given all the risks? But to make this a great piece, you have to add the details that only you can know. What does that "rush" feel like? How does that "urge" rise up in you? Is it a physical feeling? Does it cause you to fantasize acts of violence? Does it consider long-term consequences? By considering these questions, and many others, you could write a really fine piece. Finally, do you expect "time" to temper your ambition, or has that process already started?

Humans

Human beings are just machines, machines that do what you want them to do if you only know the levers to pull. No matter how complex people might seem, if you just cut them off from the network of people who give shape to their personality and the communities that form their identity, they'll be reduced to that set of levers. Doesn't matter how hard they resist, or how well they know they're being manipulated. Eventually, if you take the time, you can play them like a piano, every note right where you expect it.

-McGee

From the Beat: Do you count yourself among those people that can be reduced to predictable machines? How often do we knowingly let ourselves be manipulated by others? Why do we do it?

Relating to Anyone

I think that the ability that I have that no one really knows about is the ability to reach out to others, no matter what type of people they are. I am able to talk and relate to them whether they are having family problems or money problems and even problems in the 'hood. I love the ability to turn their heads around about the situation.

-Young Phil

From the Beat: Use your own experiences and give us an example of how and when you helped someone with a problem. It sounds like you could either be a psychologist or a priest, hearing the problems of others and counseling them. Have you thought about finishing your high school and then going to college so you could earn a living doing what you are already doing for free?

The Greatest Thing Nobody Knows

The greatest thing that ever happened to me, which nobody knows about, is when I moved to my mom's. She lives in San Diego and I lived with her for two years. It was cool at first because I never really lived with her before. At that time I was getting really good grades. But then I started smoking and ditching school. My mom found out and got really mad, so then I got in a fight with my step dad and had to move back here. Now I'm in Juvenile Hall.

-Pulou

From the Beat: What do you want to see happen next? Do you want to return to San Diego or stay in the Bay Area? Who and what do you think can help you get your life back on track? If you got into trouble both in San Diego and here, then maybe it's something within you that you need to examine.

Can You Feel Me?

Do you think that you can be my shadow for a while or no?

Can you feel me?

Things are hard to change but I ain't ready to change,

Can you feel me?

I have felt the pain of others more than my own,

Can you feel me?

Do you think that you can relate to some things that others go through, or no?

Try to be like me, I relate to people by their war stories, and it works.

Can you feel me?

Feelings are some things that you have to cherish.

When they're gone, it's like a belly flop; it's going to sting.

Can you feel me?

Or not?

-Kabb

From the Beat: It sounds like you have a strong sense of empathy for other people struggling with life, Mr. Kabb. Good writing—good communication—is giving other people the chance to understand where you are coming from.

Justice For All

Pardon me, but we're all free.

But there's still citizens who think they run our country.

Even though there's liberty and justice for all,

We are still on that rampage against each other's judgments.

And we're still fighting slavery most certainly.

Nowadays we're protected by liberty,

But God still has to put up with all our miseries.

I'm tired of fighting each other because we all still have to live together.

We all cry and we all still do wrong,

But we still live together in a nation that's very strong.

We're all just regular men.

We're not indestructible like Superman.

Nowadays we're trying to keep ourselves alive,

But most of our lives are hard to describe.

-Pulou

From The Beat: Isn't it strange that so many of us profess to believe in God, but continue to do dirt to other human beings who are created equal to us? We don't know the answer, but we think you have asked the right question, which is, as Rodney King put it: "Why can't we all just get along?"

Sorry

I'm sorry God, for the things I have done

'Cause now I'm begging for your forgiveness 'cause jail ain't no fun.

I should've thought about you before I did what I did

'Cause now I'm just waiting like an E-Bay bid.

I could have just stayed at home,

Now I'm trapped in a square dome where once a week we get to use the phone.

But I proved myself to God by what I have shown.

I pray to God every day to be released.

But then I got no home and my family just considers me diseased.

Maybe this all happened 'cause of all the weed,

'Cause now I'm sitting in jail for my birthday.

I should have thought of God all along,

Because this is the last place I belong.

-Pulou

From The Beat: If you have turned the "should have" world into the "is" world, then you're in for a better future than your past. On the same hand, it so much easier to make promises to God when you are locked up without the power to make choices for yourself and keeping those promises when the real world intrudes with all its temptations that look so appealing at the time. In other words, don't forget what you have written here.

That Advice

I think that it really is hard to make a good decision while you are in a bad situation. It's like when you are around a lot of people that are influencing you into bad decisions, then you will end up making a bad decision. If you are around people that influence you to make good decisions while you're in a bad situation, they will help you through that situation and you won't have to go through any bad consequences. You can just walk away from it.

When a good friend gives you good advice, you won't end up in Juvenile Hall or you can't get into trouble with your parents. You can just live life being positive and not think of anything negative.

-Pau

From the Beat: Maybe its time you start dispensing good advice and a positive influence to those around you instead taking bad advice when you're in bad situations. What's your advice to yourself that will keep you out of here in the future?

Wait, Wait, Wait

Waiting for the rain to come

To wash away all the pain

Waiting for that day to come

To see where I'm gonna' go

Waiting for my next visit

To get a little bit of love

Waiting for the night to come

And the day to be over . . .

So all I can do is wait, wait, wait

Wait for some freedom, to get out of here

And make the best for myself

-Nikki

From the Beat: Waiting for the future to come is somewhat wasted time, since you can't stop time. How can you use this "waiting" time to make your future better, so that you won't have to wait, wait, wait?

Fly Away

I believe I could fly,

I believe I could touch the sky,

I wish I had wings to fly away

'cause I'm tired of living life this way.

I just want to go back,

because living with my dad is wack.

I see myself running through that open door,

But first I got to serve my time in this war.

This is the cost I have to pay,

because I chose for my life to be this way.

I wish I had someone to guide me,

because when I get released I will be full of glee.

I'm tired of running free,

I just want to live my life on a spree.

My goal is to stay alive,

because my family says my choices are going to end up making me die.

So I want to prove them wrong and give it a try.

-Pulou

From The Beat: We know the feeling of wanting to escape everything (to just fly away), but we also know the reality. That's what you're now facing — the real consequences of the choices you made. We think it's understandable that you made some of these choices, but we also think that it's time to make different choices now that you can think for yourself, have experienced where your footsteps took you, and have dreams for your future.

A Day to Rest From Your Labors

We often celebrate holidays without knowing the reason for many, people are just happy to have a free day from work, especially when it falls on a Monday. This brings us to Labor day, it's origin, and it's meaning. People began celebrating the first Labor Day in the late 1800s. Peter J. McGuire, a carpenter and union leader, is usually credited with suggesting that a day be set aside for workers. The first celebration was held on September 5, 1882 in New York City. The state of Oregon became the first to recognize the day as a legal holiday in 1887. Twelve years later, the United States Congress passed legislation in 1897 making the day a federal holiday.

Some believe that the first Monday in September was decided on because there were no holidays between July 4TH and Thanksgiving. But, for whatever reason, the first Monday was chosen and has remained since the inception of the holiday. Other states were soon to follow making Labor Day a holiday as well. The day was recognized in grand fashion with speeches, parades, and picnics in the parks. In many ways it allowed families another opportunity to spend time together in a relaxed atmosphere.

Some continue to see the day as a day of rest that marks the end of summer. Labor Day has also become an indicator for the beginning of the new school year.

However, it's origin was two-fold. The holiday was also chosen as a mean to shed light on the working conditions of Americans. So, to others saw it as an opportunity to draw attention to the plight of workers. During the infancy days of the holiday, people were without the protection of unions.

Employers demanded long hours, few benefits, and low wages. Labor Day became a day to recognize the common man and the conditions in which he was forced to toil. There is a history behind everything and now you know the history behind Labor Day.

The Bible

A young man from a wealthy family was about to graduate from high school. It was the custom in that affluent neighborhood for the parents to give graduate an automobile. Michael McKinney Jr. and his father Big Mike Jerome McKinney had spent months looking at cars, and the week before graduation they found the perfect car. Michael A.K.A Mike-Mike was certain that the car would be his on graduation night.

Imagine his disappointment when, on the eve of his graduation, Mike-Mike's father handed him a gift — wrapped Bible! Mike-Mike was so angry, he threw the bible down and stormed out of the house. He and his father never saw each other again. It was the news of his father's death that brought Mike-Mike home again. As he sat one night, going through his father's possessions that he was to inherit, he came across the bible his father had given him. He brushed away the dust and opened it to find a cashier's check, dated the day of his graduation, in the exact of the car they had chosen.

P.S. Helping others can change lives. I know this firsthand, for acts of kindness made a big difference in my life. My life most likely would be completely different if others had not had charitable hearts. I am who I am.

The bottom line is that you are not too young (or too old) to put aside your own needs and wants and extend a helping hand to others. That's something I'm passionate about, and I want to share that passion with others.

We're really appreciating this next writer as of late... He's been dropping some real knowledge on us. This week he writes several pieces ranging from his belief in God to his perspective on suicide. And we can tell that this man has been through a whole lot and has learned many things as a result of what he's been through. He's been our most consistent writer as of late, so let's show him the appreciation he deserves. He's writing from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida.

Dear God

I'm trying to get my life together, but it's very difficult at the moment. The devil and I are really going through it. We can't seem to see eye to eye. I'm trying to change myself without destroying myself. The devil says that I'm different. He says that my changes are too much to deal with, so we can't make it through a week without fight over my mind, body, and soul. And for the first time in my life I don't know which way to go or which way to turn.

Monique and I are the best of friends. I've felt so close to one of my seeds. I mean it's amazing how important she makes me feel. Adrana is also doing well. My dad said she is getting so big that it's unbelievable. I can't wait to get some pictures and see her. I pray and ask you for a subscription to The Beat Within. I also pray every single morning, I ask for help for those I love and guidance for myself and I give thanks for all that you have done for me. Whenever I have a conflict with the Devil or a person or a situation and I feel myself getting angry or frustrated, I pray to you about it and I let you work through me. This always helps me through my own thought and sometimes it something that somebody tells me.

(Like my lil brother Michael Jerome McKinney ha, ha, ha) Anyways sometimes I find the answer in something that I have read in your word the Bible or The Beat Within that day. Either way, my prayers are always answered — not always as I expected them to be, but always in the way I need.

Thank you.

God help us to change. To change ourselves and to change the joy of it. To undertake the journey without understanding the destination. AMEN.

God help us to change. To change ourselves and to change the joy of it. To undertake the journey without understanding the destination. AMEN

Glenda

I woke up this morning
 You were the first thing on my mind
 I don't know were it came from
 All I know is I need you in my life,
 You make me feel like I can be a better man
 If you just say you wanna take this to another place
 Can I lay with you as your husband?
 Can I be your friend till the end?
 Can I walk with you though your life?
 (fades away)

Not An Easy Way Out

Suicide. It is an ugly word and a depressing thought. Checking out on your own terms and schedule. Hardly anyone who has ever spent a night behind bars hasn't considered it. And the longer you serve, the more often the thought comes. Check out.

What brings a human being to such a stage in life and what can we learn about stepping back and taking a deep breath?

We consider suicide because we believe it is a simple answer to a complex and distressful situation. End our life and we end the suffering, shame, and indignities we put our families and loved ones through. But do we? Or does the pain for them only begin when they get the phone call?

My female friend committed suicide, year after my friend killed herself, I still recall moments from her last days that make me ache for another chance. I struggle with feeling to guilt. I also have a growing understanding of what we can do to prevent suicide — warning signs we should know and steps to help someone through a crisis, I learned these things too late.

Suicide is the ultimate form of giving up. Many times I've watched a sporting event on T.V. and switched away when my favorite team was struggling by halftime. Later, I learned they had rallied with a dramatic comeback to win. And I missed it because I gave up when they didn't.

I wanted to give up when my mother was killed. But I realized I would hurt my daughter's more by leaving than by hanging on. So I hung on.

CONSIDERING SUICIDE?

If you're feeling suicidal now, PLEASE stop and read this. I am not a therapist or other mental health professional — only someone who knows what it is like to be in pain.

I don't know who you are, but I assume you are reading this because you are troubled and thinking about ending your life. I would prefer to be there with you at this moment, but since that is not possible, we will have to make do with this.

I have known a lot of people who wanted to kill themselves, so I know what you might be feeling. I have five simple, practical things to share with you. I won't argue with you about whether you should kill yourself, but I assume if you are thinking about it, you feel pretty bad.

Consider this: Suicide is not chosen; it happens when pain exceeds the resources for coping the pain.

You're not a bad person, crazy, or weak because you feel suicidal. It doesn't even really mean you want to die — it means only that you have more than you can bear.

There are many kinds of pain that may lead to suicide. Whether the pain is bearable differs from one person to the next. The point at which the pain becomes bearable depends on what kind of resources you have. When pain exceeds pain — copying resources, suicidal feeling result. Suicide is not a defect of character; it is simply an imbalance of pain versus coping resource. Find a way to reduce your pain, or find a way to increase your coping resources.

Here are the five things to think about

1. You need to understand that people do get through this. Statistically, there is a very good chance that you are going to live.

2. Give yourself some distance. Say, "I will wait 24 hours before I do anything." Or a week. Just because you feel like killing yourself doesn't mean you actually have to do it this minute. Put some distance between your suicidal feeling and suicidal action.

3. People often turn to suicide because they are seeking relief from pain. Remember that relief is a feeling and you have to be alive to feel it. If you take your own life, you won't feel the relief you so desperately seek.

4. Some people may react badly to your suicidal feelings and actually increase your pain instead of helping you, by saying or doing thoughtless things. But there are people who can be with you during this desperate time. And they will not judge you, or argue with you, or send you to a hospital. Nor will they try to talk you out of how badly you feel. Find one of them. Use your 24 hours, or week, and tell someone what's going on with you. It is okay to ask for help.

5. Suicidal feelings are traumatic. After they subside, you need to continue caring for yourself. But don't give yourself the additional burden of trying to deal with this alone. Just talking about how you got to where you are releases an awful lot of the pressure, maybe enough to regain your balance. Continue creating resources until they outnumber your sources of pain.

Maybe this The Beat Within will give you some small relief... but remember, one of the best coping resources is another human. Find someone who will listen and tell him or her how you feel and how you got there.

If God Went On Strike

It's just a good thing God above
 Has never gone on strike
 Or things he didn't like.

If he has ever once sat down
 And said, that's it — I'm through!
 I've had enough of those on Earth.
 So this is what I'll do:

I'll give my orders to the sun,
 Cut off your heat supply.
 And to the moon, "give no more light
 And run the oceans dry"
 Then, just to really make it tough
 And put the pressure on,
 "Turn off the air and oxygen
 'til every breathe is gone."

Do you know he'd be justified?

If fairness was the game,
 For no one has been more abused
 Or given such as disdain
 Than God — and yet he carries on,
 Supplying you and me
 With all the favors of his grace
 And everything for free.

Men say they want a better deal
 And so on strike they go,
 But what a deal we've given God
 To whom everything we owe.
 We don't care whom we hurt or harm
 To gain the things we like
 But what a mess we'd all be in
 If God should go on strike!

This Is A Letter To My People

I know that you may have a lot of ill thoughts of me, but before you judge me please take a good look at all that I've been through and all of the things that I'm still dealing with. In life we all have struggles.... Some of us go through more than others but no matter how much we go through the main point is we all have issues or some type of problem that we have to solve. That's LIFE!!! You are people of wisdom. I realize that you may feel that I'm locked up and you are free, but what you don't understand is that what you see is a microcosm of what I deal with daily. Times are still hard in prison... As a matter of fact, they're worse. I'm serious! Guards are jumping on and killing inmates... Fathers are against son... Men that grew up together as friends won't speak to each other now. Mothers are giving up and leaving their sons in prison... teacher's saying that there is no hope for our future because the kids are our future. Maybe they should try to understand that we have been subject to control our whole life, so being out of the control of our controllers maybe just what we need.

In today's world the black man is losing his rightful place and what's sad about it is that we don't care, we care, but mostly about the wrong things. We care about car rims, cloths, money, and only the LORD knows what else! We don't care about how well our children do in school or how can we create a brighter future for our families. We must regroup and prepare to take hold of our lives and direct them towards a safer environment. I must take this time and dig deep and find God within me and discover what gift has he shared with me that he wants me to share with the world. God blessed every creature with a gift... there is not one living thing that doesn't have a purpose... no... not one!!! So that makes me special.

There are many different paths in life. We have to be careful to choose the best one for us and our loved ones as well. When God made me he didn't make a thug or a gangster, crook, liar, thief, or any other down grading name that this world has placed on me. I was made the best of creation. God made me the best and then I made the choice to be what I am, but it's not too late to change. Change for the better. I can become the great being that God has always intended for me to be. The leader of our broken community is a job that I must accept. It is the change in me that is going to change our world. When God spoke to Moses, Moses was running from a land where he had just killed a man. It was in that moment that he faced his biggest task. He had to make a choice, either follow his own path or allow God almighty to give him direction.

I'm sure in making this decision Moses had to face the possibilities that he may be killed or put to death because of his actions, but Moses saw what most of us don't see. He saw what God judged him as and not what man thought about him. God did not judge Moses as a murderer! Why? Because, God knew that Moses wasn't dead. In judging a being that is alive we should be very careful in what we call that being... Because that living being is still in motion and anything that is still in motion is subject to change. Let me share with you an example of what I'm saying. If a caterpillar is considered the final stage we will never meet the butterfly. I have not reached my full potential. God has huge plans for me, but it has to be a choice made by me and from deep within.

Something To Believe In

I recently had a conversation with a fellow who insisted that he is not an atheist, but declares he does not believe in any kind of religion. He could not understand or did not want to understand that if you did not believe in any religion, you don't believe in God or a Supreme Being.

Living in today's world is tougher than ever. The stress and strain of trying to deal with the problems of every day living, one needs something to believe in. It is a fact that sometimes the world, or just living, becomes too much for us. It is during these times we need extra strength, wisdom and endurance.

It is during dark moments in our lives when we need someone that is super human to take our problems to and to reply on to help us come up with workable solutions.

During those times when it looks hopeless, we need someone or something to believe in to give us hope in spite of the situation.

All we have to do is to look at the order that exists in the universe to know that a super power is somewhere. Watch the fertile egg develop into a baby and grow into an adult being. Watch the weather year after year go through it's seasons. Watch all the heavenly bodies move continuously through the sky with each body occupying it's own path of travel. Watch the tiny corn grow into a mighty oak. Then ask yourself, does this just happen or does some super being make it happen? Those things alone ought to be able to make every living soul believe in something or somebody.

Sometimes we have problems and thoughts that we don't want to discuss with any human being. So, we talk to ourselves. But are we really talking to ourselves? Or, are we in reality talking to what we hope is that supreme power?

It is amazing how much peace and calm can come to a person by just having something or someone to believe in.

Dear The Beat Within

Thank you so much for being you, and for being a part of me! I was thinking about 9/11 and "Compassion." Compassion is born when a need prompts caring action to meet that need. Compassion is not merely being concerned for another, as sympathy is, but rather, it takes the need of another, who is suffering, who may have lost a loved one, or may just be deeply troubled, and then being compelled to act in a way that brings comfort to ease the wound, this is how compassion demonstrated it's power.

Because compassion is one of the most powerful forces on Earth, being fueled with love, and supported with respect, it can serve to heal the body, mind, spirit and emotion. It can breach the barrier of religious affiliation, social status, unforgiveness, hurt, and despair. It can bridge the gap between the rich and the homeless, the prisoner and the free, and the hopeless and those filled with hope. It gives us the power to overcome the issues of life, which cripple us and blind us with the chains of failure. When we allow our lives to be used to open doors of opportunity for miracles to be seen, heard, and experienced everyday. It will prevent us from being critical or judgmental, and it will help us to be more forgiving, and more understanding. It allows us to take the focus off of ourselves and to see with more clarity the needs around us, and then it spurs us into action to help where we can, and at the same time, it allows others to see our own needs and to help where they are able.

So it is; if the selfless, life-changing power of compassion is allowed, it can nurture the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well being of every creature it touches. It could, in effect, replace sorrow with comfort, selfishness with love, failure with success and ignorance with understanding. Once again, compassion, being fueled with love, and strengthened with respect could reshape the world, as we know it, today.

May our world see more compassion from its people even if it has to begin with me!

A Letter From Satan

I saw you yesterday as you began your daily chores. You awoke without kneeling to pray. As a matter of fact, you didn't even bless your meals or pray before going to bed last night. You are so unthankful; I like that in you. I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have not changed your way of living. Fool! You are mine!

Remember that you and I have been going steady for years and I still don't love you. As a matter of fact, I hate you. I hate you because I hate God. He kicked me out of Heaven and I'm going to use you as long as possible to pay him back. You see, fool, God loves you and he has great plans in store for you, but you have yielded your life to me and I'm going to make your life a living hell. That way we'll be together twice. This will really hurt God. Thanks to you, I'm showing him who's boss in your life. All the good times we have had, watching dirty movies, cussing, lying, cheating, being a hypocrite, fornicating, drinking, over eating, smoking, playing hooky from church, telling dirty jokes, gossiping and back stabbing folks, surely you don't want to give all this up.

I'd like to say thanks for letting me use you for the most of your life. Fool, you are so gullible. I laugh at you when you are tempted to sin and give in. Ha! Ha! Ha! You even make me sick! Sin is beginning to take its toll on your 'Life'. You look old and I need some new blood, so go ahead, teach the little kids how to sin. All you have to do is smoke, drink, cuss, fornicate, tell lies, cheat, gamble, gossip, over eat, miss Sunday school and weeknight service, party hard and listen and dance to the top ten jams. Do all of this in the presence of children and they will do it too. Kids are like that.

Well fool, I've got to go now; I'll be back in a few seconds to tempt you again. If you are really smart, you would run somewhere, confess your sins and live for God with what little bit life you still have left. It's not my nature to warn anyone, but to be your age and still sin is becoming a bit ridiculous. Don't get me wrong, I still hate you! It's just that you'd make a better fool for Christ! If you really love me you will not share this letter with anyone!

Hate and Hell's flames to you,
 Satan

Let it Go and Move On

I am so tired of hearing about Michael Vick that I could scream! If his name were Joe Blow, his story would barely make the police log. But, because he is a professional athlete making big bucks, it's big news. For those who have been in a coma recently and haven't been bombarded with the news, Michael Vick faces several charges pertaining to the fighting and killing of pit bulls. At first, he denied any involvement in the case, but after careful consideration, he changed his plea to guilty. Three of his co-defendants had already made deals outlining his involvement, so he had little choice.

Of course, the animal rights groups jumped on the bandwagon Michael Vick is now the same category as Adolph Hitler.

He has lost all of his lucrative endorsements, the NFL has suspended him indefinitely, he is facing prison time, and some speculate that his football career is over. Yes, he was wrong. Yes, he should have been truthful from the beginning. Yes, fighting dogs is barbaric. Yes, the manner in which the dogs were killed is intolerable. And, yes he should be punished.

However, before Michael Vick is drawn and quartered, we should look at the totality of what he is accused of doing. I have seen murder cases involving HUMAN BEINGS that never received as much coverage as this case.

We need to keep things in perspective.

Can you imagine how much safer the world would be if that same animal rights groups dedicated themselves to preventing crime?

Can you imagine how much safer our children would be if these same groups concentrated their energy and resources on keeping pedophiles away from our children?

Can you imagine how much better our senior citizens would be if these same groups would dedicate themselves to ensuring they don't have to decide between medicine or food? And the list goes on and on and on...

Michael Vick has been arrested. He has entered a plea of guilt. And fighting dogs does not carry a death sentence. We need to let it go and move on.

Still Sleeping

The, "American Dream." It always starts the same way in our mind. Go to school, get good grades, graduate from college, find a nice paying gig, marry the person of our dreams, buy a big house (with the white picket fence of course), have some kids and then retire after a great 25-year career. At some point during our golden years, we travel the world and enjoy summers with grandchildren at a beach house in Ft. Lauderdale. Yeah, we have it all worked out until the alarm clock sounds and we wake to the realization that, whoever conjured up this euphoric ideal, never has us in mind.

Malcom X called it the American Nightmare. For many black men in America, it goes more like this. Go to school and get kicked out for underachieving in a curriculum that is culturally based. Then, after a brief stint at a group home for juvenile offenders, we forego college to obtain a degree in "hard-knocks" from a state penitentiary.

When we get out, our reputations are already established as either dope-boys, stick-up-kids or gorilla pimps. And in what would appear as a progressive advancement to others would be hoodlums, our second trip to the pen earns our M.B.A (Masters of Being Arrested). This illustrious honor allows us the opportunity to be sentenced as career criminals upon our entry into the federal system. It is during this time that we receive our "Life Sentence" award and retire with the benefits of three hots and a cot. It's not all bad though. With good behavior, we can transfer to an old joint where they still have weights.

While this scenario may come off a little humorous, in actuality, it's not that funny at all. There are a number of young Black men, some who may be a part of your family right now, who are on a steady pace towards reality. If it seems a bit too unrealistic, stereotypical, or undisturbing, then a research of the facts will tell a very similar story.

Recent reports suggest that one out of every ten Black males are either in prison, a county jail or on probation. The high school dropout rate is even more disturbing with less than 50% of young African Americans graduating in some areas of the country. When you add in the fact that 70% of Black children don't leave in a home with their father, another 40% who haven't seen their father in the last year and that 50% of these children have never visited their father's home, It's not too difficult to figure out where the problem lies.

At one time we could shift a majority of the blame on the system and how it was designed to produce these results. Today however, we have the resources, the capital and the intellectual man-power to overcome these obstacles. Unfortunately, many of us lack the dedication and commitment to do what it take to make a difference. We have more than our share of talkers, but very few people of action.

In the end, it's about answering this one simple question. Will we wake from this nightmare we help create for our children, or will we continue to sleep and hope that something changes to make their dreams come true?

*The greatest nation on earth
 That awful day
 they would steal
 And, in so doing,
 inflicted wounds
 That would never heal...*

Just when we thought there was no room to respect this man more than we already do, he goes and writes two poems that make us respect him even more. After many attempts to convince him to send us more chapters of "George Goes To Jail," he finally sent us a letter that says he'll ask the potential publisher of the book if it's okay to do so. But in the interim, he continues to amaze us with his incredible insights and wonderful wisdom. This week he sends us two equally powerful poems that give us a closer glimpse as to what he's been through and what he believes in. The first, "Why Did Camelot Have To Die?" is about the assassination of the great president John F. Kennedy. There's some factual information, but mostly it's the writer's perspective of how tragic that event was for our country. His second, "Ballad Of Camilo Mejia (Never Go Back To Fight Again)," is about, what we're assuming is the war in Vietnam and how the horrific images of a war many people feel like we weren't supposed to fight can drive a man to never want to go back to fight again. And how though many people would feel like not going back to fight is a cowardly act, he illustrates the cowardly act was going to fight in the war in the first place. Again, we respect this man beyond mere explanation and if you choose to read on, we're guessing you'll revere him just as much as we do. He's writing from the Marion Correctional Institution in Marion, North Carolina. We appreciate all you've shared and are grateful to have met and connected with someone who has a mind like yours.

Why Did Camelot Have To Die?

Like a lamb led to the slaughter
 Kennedy rode into Dealey Plaza that
 fateful day
 With beautiful Jackie at his side,
 To the crowds they cheerfully waved...

The skies were clear and blue
 As all the angels cried
 Asking, forlornly, "Oh why, oh why,
 oh why?
 Why does Camelot have to die...?"

Cold-hearted killers gazed
 At the young prince through scopes
 Mercilessly tracking this handsome
 champion
 Of the common folk...

One shot rang out
 The free world's leader clutched at his
 throat

While his limo slowly crawled on
 Down the charnel house road...

There'd been some who'd wished to
 profit
 By sending our youth off to a jungle
 land
 To fight and bleed
 While killing the yellow man...

And those who deal in black gold
 Were angered over his plans
 To stop their hoarding of wealth
 And return some to the common
 man...

And those who inhabit the shadows
 Felt double-crossed and betrayed
 For they felt certain debts
 Were being poorly paid...

And his own top cop
 The one who liked to wear a dress
 By thoughts of forfeiting his fiefdom
 Was much distressed...

But can this answer the haunting
 question
 That the angels did cry,
 "Why, oh why, oh why?
 Why must Camelot die?"

And the banksters too
 Were deeply displeased
 By his plans to rein in
 Their runaway shylock bleeding...

And the cloak-and-dagger boys
 Had been runnin' wild and out of
 order
 So he'd vowed their little empire
 Would have to be destroyed...

And there were some who still held a
 grudge
 Over a failed invasion
 So they wished a puppet
 In charge of this nation...

And his underling
 Also wished him gone
 For, power-mad, he lusted to usurp
 The coveted throne...

And all these dark forces
 Of evil and greed
 Had, from their dark mountain
 Issued a ghastly decree...

The greatest nation on earth
 That awful day they would steal
 And, in so doing, inflicted wounds
 That would never heal...

For the great experiment called
 "America"
 That moment ceased to be
 Her brave people no longer
 Truly free...

And all of heaven
 Shook and moaned
 As the vile deed
 Continued on...

And even his own Palace Guard
 Turned a blind eye
 As the treasonous death warrant
 Had come down from on high...

Triangulated fire
 Defiled his handsome head
 While, onto his horrified wife's pink
 dress
 His life-blood-and brains - spilled...

And, as the trained rifles barked
 With an awful sound straight from
 hell

In front of God and everyone
 The young Prince was felled...

And the people didn't even realize
 What had truly transpired
 For the conspirators had already
 concocted
 A witch's brew of lies...

A patsy already in place
 A sacrificial goat to bleed
 His executioner already waiting
 Eagerly, in the wings...

The shocked nation mourned
 As his body was whisked quickly
 away
 And all the Dark Lords' cover-up
 plans
 Were quickly put into play...

By nightfall, the prince lay cold upon
 a slab
 Eyes staring out vacantly and wide
 As Americans, unbelieving
 Bitterly wept and cried...

And, on this sad, awful day
 All the angels also did cry,
 "Why, oh why, oh why?
 Why did Camelot have to die...?"

A riderless horse paraded
 While his young son bravely saluted
 Unaware his dear father had been
 taken
 By a scheme diabolical and
 convoluted...

They lit a flame
 To burn, eternally, upon the grave
 Of this great man
 So cruelly slain...

And the many who loved him
 Could only bid him a sad good-bye
 While all heaven's dear angels wept
 and cried
 For Camelot had indeed died.

Ballad Of Camilo Mejia

(Never Go Back To Fight Again)

Well I've seen sights
 No man should have to see
 Awful scenes that will scar my soul
 For all eternity...

I've seen mothers wailing
 Asking Allah why
 On a pretty day
 Their two-year-old daughter had to die...

I've seen an innocent man's head
 Cut from his body by American machine
 gun fire
 Brutal images that seldom get flashed
 Down the AP wires...

And I've seen my fellow soldiers
 Laying with their guts in their hands
 Pleading with Jesus
 Just to bring their lives to an end...

Then one day the word came
 I'd be getting a furlough back to the
 states
 A brief little respite
 From that land of fear and hate...

And holding my wife and daughter
 Some humanity returned to me
 Knew I'd have to make a decision
 To truly be all that I can be...

I thought of the innocent children
 Poisoned by depleted uranium
 I thought of all the expensive tanks
 Built out of titanium...

And I had to ask myself:
 Just what is this war for?

A brave battle to free the oppressed
 Or just a little something to line the
 pockets
 Of some corporate whores
 Yeah, maybe just a little something to
 line the pockets
 Of some greedy corporate whores...

And I thought of all the babies
 That had been killed and maimed
 In an imperialist push
 For material gain...

So I soon made the decision
 That I could never go back to fight again
 Yeah I know I could never
 Go back to fight again
 They could lock me in a cage and smear
 my name
 But I could never go back again...

'Cause what would it profit me
 To kill to keep my body whole
 But leave behind the biggest part of my
 mind
 And almost all of my soul?

[Instrumental Break]

And it scarred me
 When I realized what I must do
 And I knew my actions
 Would inevitably be misconstrued...

But I informed my superiors
 And I turned myself in
 And they said I was a coward
 'Cause I wouldn't go back to fight
 again...
 'Cause I wouldn't go back to fight
 again...

But others said I was a hero
 For standing up for what I believe
 But my heart says the truth's lying
 somewhere in the middle
 Somewhere in between...

'Cause I don't believe in heroes
 That's an empty dream
 Just part of the PR scheme
 For the war-making machine

But those who called me a coward
 Well they were halfway correct
 Yet not for the reasons
 That you might expect...

See, I'm not a coward
 For layin' my weapons down
 But I was for goin'
 The first time around
 Yes, I was for goin'
 The first time around...

And now I'm indeed in a cage
 But I've never felt so free
 Cause my conscience's clear
 As clear as it can ever be...

And I will never go back to fight again
 I will never go back to fight again...

'Cause I will not kill
 To keep my body whole
 While giving up most of my mind
 And all of my soul...

And especially not to line the pockets
 Of some greedy corporate whores
 Yeah, especially not to line the pockets
 Of some greedy corporate whores...

CHRIS GRAJEDA

It's been a real long time since we've heard from this intelligent mind. And The Beat just doesn't feel the same without him. This week, our beloved Chris, sends us two poems that we think are good, but we also feel like we've gotten better from him. The first, "How You Feel," is a dedication to his wifey and it's basically telling her how much he misses her and more so how much he wants to know how she feels. The second, "LIFE," is a great acrostic that gives the rest of us tips on how to live our lives. You don't have to take heed to them if you don't want to, but we think it would be wise if you did because Chris has been through his share of experiences and has learned many lessons. He's writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA. We hope there's not too much time between the next time we hear from him again... We miss his perspective when we don't hear from him...

How You Feel

(Dedicated To My Wifey)

I'm thinking about you so hard, I can't control my mind,
 In the morning, noon and night, you consume all my
 time.

You have a powerful presence, that makes my heart stop,
 I look you in the eyes, and I feel like I'm going to drop.

But as I sit here, and I miss you like hell,
 I try to cope with time, and avoid the word, "Fail."
 I want to tie the knot, and make you forever mines,
 The only thing stopping me is, my doing time.

Damn I want you bad right in my arms.
 Please take me up baby, I'll protect from all harm
 I'm writing you this poem, just to let you know
 I'm giving you my all, I will never let you go.

So please think baby girl, and tell me what's real
 Ain't no more secrets, just tell me HOW YOU FEEL!

LIFE

(L) Life is precious so take it for granted. Make something out of it.

(I) If trials and tribulations fall in your pathway, don't let them tear you down, deal with them positively and keep pushing on.

(F) Faith is the key to success. If you believe in yourself you could be and do anything you want. Just have faith.

(E) Envious people is what you need to stay clear of. You got to stay on point with your guards up at all time. Shake the haters and brush them off.

Magical People

We as God's children are all magical people, we all possess special talents to do special things. Most go through life without knowing what magic they possess. And it's cause of the way they was raised. For instance, if you go through life and can't read or write, how do you know that you possess a magical penmanship? Or the magic that you must use to form words into poetry or music? You may even possess the magic of touching people through the power of words through powerful speeches. But without the full knowledge of understanding the meaning of words, you cannot use the full power of your magic. Some people have a magic power of dealing with animals, but don't know this cause their to busy focusing on other subjects in life, where they possess no magic.

We all are gifted with the magic of raising kids, but many don't get a chance to exercise that magic 'cause many fathers and mothers leave their kids for other worldly matters for the grandparents to raise their kids. You have kids that become computer wiz's at a very young age, it's a form of magic. You have kids, women, and men who are extremely good with numbers and words, but millions use this magic in evil ways.

My parents left me when I was an infant to be raised by my grandmother out in the country. I had three horses when I was nine years old. One of those horses was wild, and his name was Dynamite, could no one ride him, but me! And I loved that horse, there was a special magic that I possessed when riding him and that horse loved me. Everyone would always say I was crazy for riding him, but he never hurt me. I've owned pit-bulls that were extremely mean, but they was never mean with me. And I loved those dogs, and they loved me. I also had a pet bobcat, and a pet raccoon many people said they couldn't be tamed. But I tamed them both, along with various snakes. You will soon see that we as humans all possess magic, and we're magical people.

I left home at the tender age of thirteen, cause of the struggle that I watched my grandmother go through trying to raise four kids. Over the years I've been shot three times, on one of those occasions I caught a bullet in the head and one through the back, where the bullet enlarged right next to my heart. The bullet to the head reflected off a bone. During the shooting I had to jump out of the car running sixty miles per hour. And then I jumped up with busted knees and elbows and ran three blocks. I was internally bleeding, thirty minutes later I found myself in the hospital. Two hours later, I was released from the hospital walking on my own two feet.

Soon after I was hit by a truck doing over fifty miles per hour, I became a victim of a hit and run. I was in a coma for four days. When I came out the coma, I didn't know what had happened to me. And I stayed in the hospital for over a month. The doctor told my grandmother that I had a will to live. My grandmother told them that Jesus Christ was with me. I had

Writing from the Washington Correctional Institution in Chilpey, Florida, we bring you this Beat veteran writer who we haven't heard from in way too long. His perspective is refreshing and this week he sends us two pieces that just reiterate why we enjoy his thoughts so much. The first, "Magical People," is a very inspirational piece that we find is also very true. Basically, he says that we all have unique and special talents that make us magical. For whether we're good at numbers or liked by the animal kingdom (like him), we all do have a special gift. And if we're wise enough to recognize what we're gifted in and are able to run with that, the possibilities are limitless. He then concludes with a song dedicated to the one entity he gives all the credit to and His name is Jesus Christ. We really love hearing from Cecil and you'll see why if you decide to keep reading...

two operations on my right leg, where the bone was shattered. And I was told that I'd have a terrible limp, this day and time I have no limp at all.

Half of my face was shredded, but now I have no scars where my face was shredded. Six months later I had to jump out of a four-wheel drive, cause my life was threatened. I ended up, under the truck where it ran over both my legs. To my surprise it broke no bones, and didn't do any damage to my prior injuries. I jumped up and ran four miles down an old country road, while the guy tried fixing his truck cause he ran into some bushes.

Three years later I was shot again, the victim in a robbery. I was shot through my left thigh with a 357 magnum, but that didn't stop me from trying to get my money back. The guy emptied the gun as bullets flew by my head like angry hornets. I didn't go to the hospital until the next day. And was released from the hospital the same day after they'd cleaned my wound.

I've been back and forth to prison since, and during my visits I started educating myself. That's when I started realizing that I possessed a talent to write. A talent that has been laying dormant for years, due to my lack of education. Due to my experience, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, I've talked people out of the drug world, I've prevented killings, even fights. The revenge I was seeking, cause of the death of my beloved sister has turned into something positive. Now I write music, poetry, poems, short stories, novels, and so much more based on life experiences. And my stories possess magical powers. Therefore I'm one of millions, magical people.

I've written two novels based on my life, and the life of others and they both are equally powerful. I will soon become known in the hip-hop industry, and a known author. I've told you readers of my past, I have no illnesses. And I look over ten years younger than my actual years. To all you brotha's and sister's old and young. Just keep in mind that you all are magical people. And it's never too late to become, anything you wanna be. I'm gonna share this song with you, I titled it "Jesus Christ," it's just one of many songs I've written. Keep your heads up, anything that you do to help mankind makes you a "magical person" and don't forget it.

Jesus Christ

I sing this song for Jesus Christ, the Son of God
The lyrics that I spit is from my heart.
Showing my appreciation for all you've done
Being there when I had no biological father or mom.

I used to always wonder why I was left alone
Without my father or mother
Sister died why I was young, never had a brother
Or no one else I could turn to for help
Jesus Christ was always there.
There's been times when I was hungry
In this cold world all alone.
Jesus would always come to my aid
I was thankful for just water and bread.
The times I was hospitalized, I thought I was by myself

Now I realize Jesus Christ was always there.

Then when I became addicted to drugs
Jesus was always there, showing me nothing but love.
At a very young age, I started getting locked up
In detention centers and jails
I would always feel His presence in my prison cell.

Over the years I've been through many trial's and tribulations
So much corruption, racism, violence, and hate.
Been shot, stabbed, and in some bloody fights
Always standing up for what I considered was right.
For years I've been living the life style of a hustling thug
And Jesus continues to show me his unconditional love.
Wiping away my tears as they fall like rain
From all the suffering, heartache, and pain.

I sing this song for Jesus Christ, the Son of God
 The lyrics that I spit is from my heart.
 Showing my appreciation for all you've done
 Being there when I had no biological father or mom.

They said I'd be dead before I was twenty-five
 As you can see Jesus Christ had kept me alive.
 Through all the suffering, pain, and heartache
 You endured far more pain from wooden stakes.
 Pierced hands and feet
 And you did it all for me.
 And other men and women...
 You died for our sins.

I can't thank you enough for all you did
 Showing me love when I was a kid.
 Being there when there was no others
 You've always been my father and mother.

I'm proud of the person that I've become
 A brotha with love in his heart.
 I know it's only because of you
 With you by my side, I know I can't lose.
 So all mankind listen to this song
 Know within your hearts, that you're not alone.
 Jesus Christ is by your side
 If it wasn't for Him, you wouldn't be alive.
 Can you feel me?

I sing this song for Jesus Christ, the Son of God
 The lyrics that I spit is from my heart.
 Showing my appreciation for all you've done
 Being there when I had no biological father or mom.

So all you kids who face this struggle

Raised in this world without your father or mother.
 Even when you feel nobody cares
 Just remember Jesus Christ is always there.
 He's the father of fathers, and mother of mothers...
 And he'll always be there, when there's no others.
 But you must keep the faith
 I'm talking about all races and faces.

I sing this song for Jesus Christ, the Son of God
 The lyrics that I spit is from my heart.
 Showing my appreciation for all you've done
 Being there when I had no biological father or mom.

Jesus Christ is the king of kings
 Put your trust in him you can do anything.
 Try not to violate his laws
 When He comes back you'll pay the cost.
 He knows you're not perfect, nobody is
 All you can do is the best you can
 Asking for forgiveness for your sins.
 You can learn more from the King James version...
 You will know in your heart, Jesus Christ truly loves you.
 The lyrics that I spit is from a hustling thug
 Deep within my heart, I know Jesus loves me.
 Can you feel me?

I wonder if the stores will sell me
 'Cause I sing this song for Jesus.

I sing this song, I sing this song for Jesus
 'Cause He loves me. And all his creations,
 Yes He love's you and me
 I sing this sing for Jesus.
 I sing this song can you feel me!

HEATHER FOTION

A Tribute To Rod

What did you learn from Rod's life? How has the image of his life inspired you to make a change in your life, your community, or the world in general? Please consider what others have said about him in class/the stories they have shared, the Daily Cal article, the fact that he was one in fourteen people to obtain the scholarship, and how many people are mobilizing to make his memory last.

Although I did not have many interactions with Rod, the ones that I did have were quite positive. What I saw in him was a man who knew his goals and the steps he needed to take to achieve them, a positive individual who was on his way to make a large impact on the world, and someone who challenged those around him to keep an open mind make every experience worthwhile. I think that I learned a lot from his life, simply from the Daily Cal article. Despite his lack of resources, he was able to obtain a scholarship that would allow him to get an amazing education at CAL until 2015. That alone was such a feat — even those of us who did grow up with excellent resources could not have accomplished that.

What touched me most about him was his last paper for Ed190. Hearing his words, his convictions; was so inspiring. I think the message he was trying to convey was that we should all be empowered to make a change. Despite setbacks and differences in opinion, we all need to work together to make change in the world—obviously we all come from different backgrounds and convictions, but with a class such as Ed190, we can become familiar with the tool that is necessary to better the world: communication. Rod was able to overcome his shyness so that he truly contributed to our Ed190 class... he

There are those rare people in life that have the ability to inspire us to do something meaningful with our own lives. The people who lead by example and not just by what they say. Well, from what we heard about Rod, a greatly revered Cal Berkeley student, who truly passed away before his time, he's one of those amazing people. Not only his passing, but mostly the life he dedicated himself to, full of obstacles he had to overcome just to be able to go to such a prestigious university as Cal Berkeley, inspired several Cal students to come to our office and volunteer to do Beat workshops. We wish we could've met Rod, for it sounds like he was an incredible person. But don't take our word for it, read a tribute to him by one of the young women he's touched and motivated to give back to the community. She's currently enrolled at Cal and already started her first workshop in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. We appreciate her efforts and have a feeling she'll take what she learned from Rod's life and pass the same inspiration on to the youngsters in juvenile hall.

learned the power of communication and was therefore able to teach us the wisdom that made him such an amazing person.

I can only hope that his vision to make the world a better place through communication is not in vain. The fact that Rod was taken from this world at such an early age, with so much ahead of him, and with his impressive accomplishments — being loved by every person who knew him, and already making a change in the world through his passion of cutting hair — is only more reason for each of us to make a change in our lives. When we spoke about Rod during class, it was very apparent how many people loved him and were touched by his life even though most of us only knew him for a short amount of time. The only way that I can truly contribute to keeping his dream alive is to vow that I will strive, every day, to be a better person. I promise to be more open minded, more willing to learn from my peers and their visions, and be a more accepting and outgoing person in general.

Serious Speech

Hello young boys and girls. This speech is produced to lead you in a path of positivity. I get that there are many bedazzled girls and boys on earth today. But caring mentors should be prepared for the mission to guide these children before things go wrong and they get trapped in some negative off the track things. My encouragement comes deep within, with no falsification attached. Construction is important.

1. You are born starting elementary school, and crawl through it (start of life)
2. You are walking attending junior high school (life gets tested)
3. High School (life is serious)
4. College (the real deal to responsibility and a future)
5. Occupation (future and dedication)

Discouragement shall be avoided at all times, if it has to do with detaching from your education and goals. This planet was created by god, and you're free to accomplish in any business, trade, or dream you choose legally. Study and build your skills without abdicating and a result success multiplies. Most important, don't stop moving forward over any rejections. The world is too large not to make it, so keep going.

You know, when I was a young boy, I had close opportunities to be successful in being a boxer, singer, athlete, writer/producer, electronic engineer, and much more. My mistake was not following the most important speech to life. Take heed to my mistake and do the opposite of that mistake.

Make your life a prophecy by proceeding through. Read, write, and study takes a person a long way, above limits.

I forbid criminalizing and brainwashing our young boys and girls. The concerns must keep our young anti-prison, anti-violence, anti-racist, and train them to stay in school.

I have a army of kids in my family that gives me a extra vision to stay on the subject of the young to steer correctly. I admire kids in general, but my daughter and my nieces and nephews are all my biggest loved ones from heart.

Kuji funza pia wewe naweza, na maisha usia wa pia njema. Kaa juu.

Translation: study all you can, and life will be all good. Stay up.

This next writer drops some "serious" knowledge on us this week. He usually doesn't write much, but his words are powerful enough to speak volumes. His first piece is a push to the younger generation to pursue their education. And we definitely can't argue with that because we feel like understanding and knowing can be the key to breaking the cycle of shackles and handcuffs. Once we know there's a better way, it makes it difficult to choose anything other than a better way. He then closes with a piece that illustrates his roots and how he was stripped away from those roots. He expresses, rather candidly, how he would love nothing more than to find his relations in the motherland. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, and if you read on, be prepared for some hard-hitting ideas.

An African Lost

Slave name Daniel Verdell Rowe. Lost in knowing my African appellation. Ancestors from Africa kidnapped centuries ago into forced slavery by the U.S. so that led to Africans, like myself, to birth in the U.S.A. instead of Africa. No idea what tribe or family back home in Africa I belong to.

Born in Los Angeles, California, called a black man. The country whom had kidnapped my race bedazzled us Africans to believing that we were originally Americans. We were taught the history of Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, and other American history, but deprived the most serious tangible stories of our beloved country of the red, black, and green, and our people born there. Nor were we lectured on the struggles of freedom fighters like George Jackson, BPP, Assata Shakur, and others similar in the revolution.

It wasn't until I hit prison when I learned, and got put upon lore on things left out to keep us Africans over here blind. I got sturdy in the areas of all types of prison struggles and abuses, class struggles, liberation movement in general.

Marcus Garvey inspired me to sharpen my tool (brain) and continue in living in as a strong fighting survivor, and educate and absorb skills on a positive level, and be something that the oppressors don't want me to be. The liberation flag stands to mean: red — blood and struggle, black — the people and color, green — land and future.

A mistake made was allowing invaders into Africa to get too comfortable, and Africans not staying alert.

Will I ever find my relations in Africa? Maybe, maybe not. I pray someday I will. I once was lost, and now I have a clear view.

SICK RICK

This incredible new artist and self-proclaimed poet drops some knowledge on us this week. Although he sends two very short poems, we can tell that he's willing to share more with us down the road being that we do accept regular poetry. He calls them encouragements. The first, titled "Crime Doesn't Pay," is a quick synopsis of how he came to be where he is and also the lesson he learned from that, hence the title. He then closes with a poem called "Growing Up In The Projects," where again he illustrates the hardships he's had to go through in order to get to the realizations he's making today. Let's embrace this new writer and show him that he's not alone. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Crime Doesn't Pay

It started out stealing from my mom's purse
Then I started stealing candy from the store
Then I started using meth and cocaine
Then I started to steal people possessions on the street
Then I started going in the stores
And the first words that came out my mouth is,
"Everybody hit the ground"
"Now I'm locked up and crime doesn't pay"

My mistake was not following the most important speech to life. Take heed to my mistake and do the opposite of that mistake.

Growing Up In The Projects

Growing up in the projects living like a hardhead,
Slangin' speed and didn't know how to read,
All I know was to gangbang and fight,
And get high, smoke weed all night,
This ain't got me nowhere but locked up like some kind of animal.
Plant a positive seed and it shall grow.

In My Neighborhood

It's a beautiful day in my neighborhood, would you be my
But the real question is, could you be my
My neighbor
It's a beautiful day in my neighborhood, would you be my
But the real question is, could you be my
My neighbor
Walk with me
Let me show you what I see
There's not a lot of peace
Babies sleeping in the streets
Kids dying every week
I see omega when I sleep
Before I pass away
I thank the Lord for my day
I sin so much, I almost break down
when I pray
And I can't rest
In a war zone without my vest
In the future I see death
Tomorrow will never come
You're looking for help and find none
Life used to be fun
Before the gangsters and the guns
Before the killings and the drugs
Before my dad beat my moms
We were all happy
Watching Mr. Rogers with my granpapi
Now I turn around and my kinfolks stab me
I think they want my life
'Cause I ain't living it right
I let you hit me once but don't ever hit me twice
You can have what you took
I marked it down in my history book
No love lost, but I could never trust a crook
Most of my neighbors are shady
Cranked out going crazy
On a beautiful day
Sometimes I just wanna run away
But this is where I was raised
So here is where I stay
This is my varrio
It's a beautiful day in my neighborhood, would you be my
But the real question is, could you be my
My neighbor
It's a beautiful day in my neighborhood, would you be my
My neighbor
But the real question is, could you be my
My neighbor
I see my days turn into nights
Under the street lights
It's hard to stay alive
Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide
This is hell on earth
All I was given was my daddy's curse

We haven't heard from this next writer in quite some time and his latest piece/song just reminds us of why we miss his insights so much. Using the old school Mr. Rogers introduction, "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood..." Lil' Spanks gives us a front row seat into the pain he's experienced growing up in his neighborhood. And while doing so he repeatedly invites us to come be his neighbor. We thought that was brilliant because it reaches all. It puts the reader in the place he was in growing up and each time you picture yourself there you begin to wonder how hard it must've been to go through all that turmoil. The bright side is that he was strong and persistent enough to become a solid individual on the other end. However, we can also tell that the struggle for him, and for the rest of us, isn't over. He shares his insights from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Hopefully, it won't be long before we hear from him again... Great writing, thanks...

With nothing to lose, my heart hurts
What's living really worth
Save me god
Life is really getting hard
If I don't steal, I might starve
I might not live to see tomorrow
I'm too good to beg or borrow
But I ain't never had my own shhh
and so I'm quick to get 'em
I'd rather smoke crank and roll with
fake friends
Coke in my nose to keep my soul
frozen
I smoke a couple leños (PCP) and I
talk to ghost
If you know me you know
I'm never in Sunday service, but I talk
to God
Sometimes I read his word and I walk
with God
So cover me lord
If she's my enemy what's she hugging
me for
She gots my son, but I'm stuck with
a whore
I read the stars at night, to keep
myself going, I lost count of my tears
Over the years
I had to fight to face my fears
Trying to lace my peers
But they're killing me lord
Crank sales on every corner I'm on
Now we're all done dude
Mr. Bush, it's all on you
Never was the man to fill your daddy's
shoes
Now we're mad at you
Because we're starving little kids with
locked up fathers
And all we wanted was a Bill Cosby or
a... Mr. Rogers
It's a beautiful day in my
neighborhood, would you be my
But the real question is, could you be
my
My neighbor
Lord you can see it in my eyes
All the pain I hold inside
It doesn't help when I get high
But smoking gets me by
So I'll keep smoking
There's a reason for me living, I just
ain't knowing
I'm lost with a gift
Should've been a baller, but I'm far
from the shhh
But why should I quit
I've been writing so long
I'll live on

Thru my words when I'm gone
That's if they'll miss me
'Cause now I feel they're out to get
me
They love to see me with my knees in
the dirt
Choking on tears, I try to breathe but
it hurts
When I'm broke and out of dope, I'll
fiend to the first
It's in my blood, I'm just trapped in a
curse
Gods the only one who knows how I
live
Knows the wrong I'm about to do and
forgave the wrong I already did
Before I lose my life, I think of the
years they never wanted me lord
If I died tonight, they wouldn't notice
me gone
I took my heart and put it all in a
song
All my thoughts as well
I'm keeping my soul, 'cause it's not
for sale
Forget if you feeling me, 'cause I'm
feeling myself
I never put the blame on you and said
you did it, 'cause I did it myself
I'm the one who didn't ask when I
needed help
I never told you of all the pain that I
felt
I kept it locked away
Got high off crank
Watched the night turn into day
Counted the stars until the sun fell
into place
And I'm still awake
I know what you did behind my back
just the other day
But when you looked in my eyes and
lied right in my face
I knew you were fake
And love was just a word you heard
me say
So I guess I'm just a game that you
like to play
In my varrio
It's a beautiful day in my
neighborhood, would you be my
But the question is could you be my
My neighbor
It's a beautiful day in my
neighborhood, would you be my
But the real question is, could you be
my
My neighbor

The Boy

The boy is lost, walking, not knowing where his life is headed;
 With a mind and soul that grieves for so much more,
 But the chances seem all shredded.

The stability of the ground is all dirty and broken;
 But the feelings and desires he holds within are yet not spoken.

The wishes and dreams in his heart cry and scream
 With agony to please be released;
 But the position he is in
 In his path doesn't allow them to yet be unleashed.

As he keeps walking he feels the evilness floating with the winds;
 Waiting for him to get weak to start polluting his lungs with its sins.

The clouds are so grey and the trees leafs are rotting with the color brown;
 But he keeps walking forward as if he didn't vision anything or hear a sound.

It starts to rain and the dark water tries to block his innocent eyes;
 And tries to brainwash him with its brilliant, wicked lies.

As he takes a second thought
 His surroundings tell him there's no reason to moving forward;
 And this energy and hope are just going to be a waste
 And he's not going nowhere.

But something else within him tells him the opposite and to not give up;
 And that this road will soon be over and he will not end up stuck;

So he keeps walking forward with his wishes, hopes, and dreams
 Leading him to his fate;
 Giving him the energy to fight through this path
 That doesn't seem like a mistake!

This next young writer is wise well beyond his years. It's refreshing to come across a writer that's way more mature than you would expect a young man to be at his age. He's seventeen and writing from the Preston Youth Correctional Facility (a California Youth Authority institution) in Lone, CA. He's from Los Angeles, so he's written for a publication before. The Inside-Out Writers program, who we've connected with on several occasions, published his writing when he was in juvenile hall and we can see why. He's a poet that has the tremendous ability of being able to express himself in a manner we find more genuine than most. He sends us six poems, all equally worth reading, and gave us a whole lot of insight on who he is. It's definitely appreciated. We want to welcome this writer with open arms because we have a feeling he'll blow us away every time he writes. Thank you for sharing all you've shared and hopefully this will just be the beginning of a long-lasting and beneficial on both parties relationship. The Beat Within you requested is in the mail as we speak.

Inside My Mind

Why don't men ever seem to cry?
 I'm not sure why I'm thinking this I guess
 Just letting time by;
 While in this cell thinking "how can I fly?"
 But that's impossible, so why even lie;
 About the way I'm feeling, is it because
 Of my pride?
 Or because I never really cried?
 Oh! Maybe it was my heart that always
 Seemed so dried;
 Because my world always lied;
 About me doing nothing else but the
 Fast "G" ride;
 Damn! I can't! I wanna fly;
 Live free of sin like the birds in the sky;
 How did I end up like this, I don't
 Know why;
 But my purpose to life will surface
 Before I die!

Words Of A Soldier

So here I go, coming clean, confessing all of my sins,
 And most of the bad things,
 That have been tormenting my life's dreams.

My life has not been so good,
 Living nothing but the hood,
 With a corrupted mentality like if I have should.

Not caring whether to live or die,
 And in my mind all I thought was ride,
 With the support of my Mexican pride.

But damn! Here I am once again,
 Looking for my so-called friends,
 That I thought would ride with me to the end.

Shhh! I guess I was wrong,
 Being ignorant for listening to that song,
 That I interpreted as if this is where I belong.

Now look at me I'm sinking,
 Not knowing what I'm thinking,
 And wishing my actions were as smart as I am speaking.

And now I feel like I have nothing left but this cell,
 A body that's been through hell,
 And a mind, heart and soul that will prevail!

*As he keeps walking he
 feels the evilness floating
 with the winds;
 Waiting for him to get
 weak to start polluting
 his lungs with its sins.*

My People

In our lives we were put in a place in which we did not
 intend to live in,
 And a place that brainwashed us to fail and commit
 nothing but sin.

We grew up to be people that are ignorant
 And that were taught to make bad choices,
 That when positive was available and angels came by to
 help
 We ignored their voices.

We grew up in a world
 That was haunted by negativity and wickedness,
 And when we failed and people died
 Their meanings to us did not make sense.

Most of us were shown how to fight, lie, and steal,
 That we didn't even hesitate to think twice when it was
 time to kill.

Our minds were so corrupted
 That now we're proud of the life that we represent;
 But our ignorance is so great that when consequences
 come to life
 We just cannot comprehend.

We run around stealing and killing in our already poor
 communities,
 That when we get put in jail for our stupidity, we blame
 the authorities.

But when the questions come
 And they wonder why we act this way,
 Our lack of knowledge and intelligence catches on to us
 And we have nothing in return to say.

Some of us make excuses
 And find ways to explain why we live the way we do,
 But nobody would ever tell you
 What's real or what's really true.

The sad thing about this is that this cycle keeps going
 on
 Without no intention of coming to a conclusion,
 And the longer it goes the more young lives we end up
 losing.

I, myself, am part of this cycle and I'm still in this life
 That has given me the most crucial ride,
 But now finding a purpose to life
 Because where I come from there's nowhere I could find
 some pride!

*Our minds were so corrupted
 That now we're proud of the life
 that we represent;
 But our ignorance is so great that
 when consequences come to life
 We just cannot comprehend.*

Learn To Love

As I look up at the sky,
 A tear drops from my eye,
 All my life I tried,
 To become a better guy,
 But I refuse to live a lie,
 Bet yet I don't want to die,
 And tell this world good-bye,
 But all I can ask god is why?

If I could live today,
 And find a better way,
 To feel the things I say,
 Without emotion that play,
 Each and every day,
 Where everything is okay
 It would be a brighter day.

As the wind makes the day cool,
 Our problems lay in a pool,
 A pool that we use as a tool,
 To stop acting a fool,
 And live a day or two,
 I really wish I knew,
 What god wants me to do?

But love is the key,
 To make you and me,
 Walk and see,
 And let life be,
 Just as a simple plea,
 If only we, "LEARN TO LOVE!"

*Just as a simple plea,
 If only we, "LEARN TO LOVE!"*

Why

Why do we always ask why?
 Instead of solving the problem which
 Is something we never try.

Why when things happen in life and
 We don't seem to understand,
 We ask why cause we never stop
 To try and comprehend.

Why do we sit around wondering why
 Things are going the way they are,
 Instead of seeking for solutions
 Which aren't that far.

Why shouldn't we go that extra mile and
 Find a simple solution,
 So our struggles and pain could
 All come to a conclusion,
 But damn! Too bad that in our ignorant
 World this will always be an illusion,
 Because the negativity around us
 Darkens our eyes vision,
 So once again here we go ending
 Up without a final decision.
 Why?

The World Will Turn!

I've made mistakes and learned,
Lived life the best I could, as time passed...
As the world turned.
I've made good choices and bad,
Loved and lost!
There were times I was happy
And times I was sad.
I've dreamed and schemed,
Alone in the streets just a one-man team!
Trusted few... 'Cause I knew I was the only one I could truly trust.
When I was doing bad I pushed on 'cause I knew I must.
Never gave up, I guess I had too much pride.
Lied, cheated, and stole before I'd ask for a helping hand.
Naïve to think no one ever walked in my shoes,
That there was nobody who would understand.
Pushed loved ones away...
Secluded myself to a life of pain!
Through it all grandfather stuck by my side,
Trying to lead me to the right road but I was purposely losing my way Then justifying it by saying I tried.
Yet still... whispers in my heart saying I have a purpose
Then it dawned on me, grandfather is the only one I could truly trust. As the years pass the whispers become louder
I'm slowly finding my way to the right road of my ancestors,
And when I get there I pray that I stay on the good road.
It has so much to offer, there's so much for me to learn.
It excites me, I'm looking forward to life, for time to pass...
The world to turn!

What a treat to hear from this next writer because he's been an avid reader of The Beat Within, however never wrote to us until now. And we feel like he's giving us more credit than we deserve, but then again maybe we're just being modest. Let's quote his letter to us. "I hope the letter and poem wasn't too long and I hope you put both in your magazine. I really want the younger generation to read them and hopefully feel something like I have while reading many things in your magazine. I would also like to thank you, your magazine inspired me to write years ago, I've written over 500 poems and stories over the years. I would have never opened that door in my mind if not for your magazine. Its good to see a magazine that represents, helps, and gives to others in my situation and lifestyle." He's writing from the California Medical Facility in Vacaville, CA, and it's our pleasure to have been able to touch his life. And even more of a pleasure that now he's touching ours. We hope to hear from you soon...

To The Beat Within

I hope this letter reaches you in the best of ways. This is my first time writing your magazine. I've never written before but I've been reading for the past eight years. I'm sending this letter and poem I wrote with the hope that you'll put both in your magazine. Hear me out!

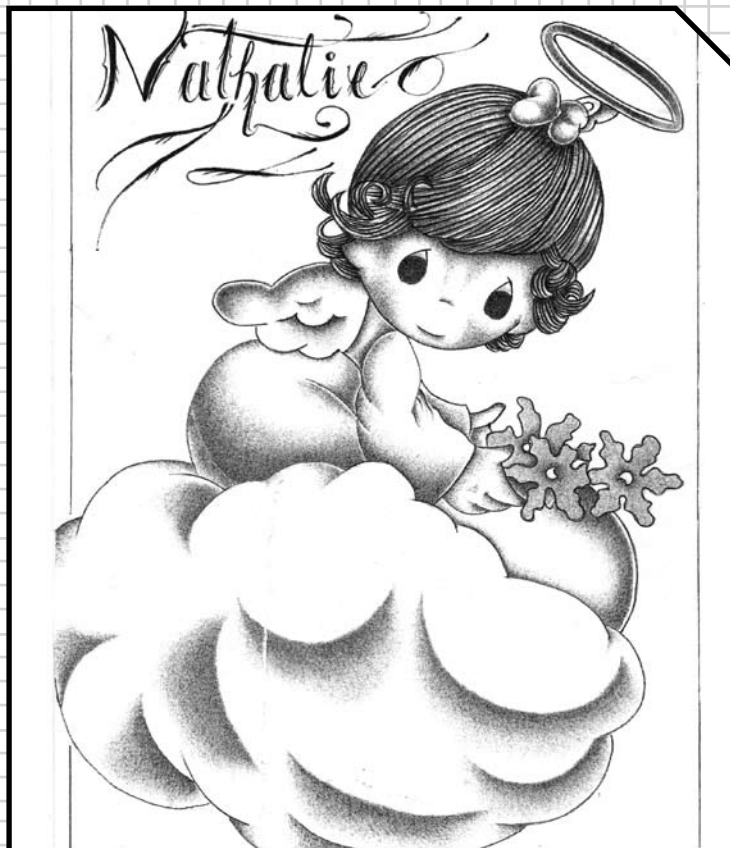
My name is Ant, I'm twenty-three years old and from Vallejo, Ca. Currently I'm in state prison, I was sentenced to twelve years. I've been down two so far with eight and a half to go. This wasn't the beginning for me. I first got locked up almost nine years ago. In and out of juvenile hall for a while 'till I was sixteen and the court decided I was a menace and sent me to the California Youth Authority. Got out when I was eighteen and a half and went on to do many violations and even caught my first adult case at the age of twenty, which also gave me my first strike.

I then was convicted of three felonies in one year. I was on CYA parole and probation in three different counties throughout the bay area. The longest I was out since I went to CYA at sixteen years old was four and a half months. Then I caught my current case. At my hearing the judge called me "a career criminal with no hope." He gave me the twelve years, plus another strike. My second one! Do you know what it feels like to just turn twenty-two years old and have two strikes and be called a career criminal with no hope. It hurts. All I was trying to do is have fun, I wasn't in a gang or nothing, just looking to have a good time and along the way I made a lot of bad choices. I'll tell you what, it wasn't worth it, not even close!

When I was young I used to read The Beat Within. This magazine inspired me to write my first poem. I've always read but chose never to write the magazine 'til now. I look back to the stories and poems that I read and that inspired me to write and I ask myself why? Why didn't I learn from their mistakes? Now I'm writing in hopes that someone will read this and realize they don't want to end up like me. My best years will be spent in prison and when I do get out I'll be walking on eggshells. With two strikes anything could put me away for life. That street lifestyle got me in this situation and I regret it. I'm missing out on so much, I just hope those that read this learn from my mistakes and don't make the same ones. It took this for me to realize I got to change. I went through life with my eyes closed, I just hope and pray you open your eyes before it's too late.

I'm also sending a poem I wrote, I want to explain a lil' bit before you read it. I'm Native American and practice my ancestors religious beliefs. In my poem I talk about the "red road" or the "good road." What it is, is the spiritual path we take during life, it's a way of life! I also speak of grandfather who we also refer to as the greater of all things, our higher power. I guess you could say our God. I hope you enjoy the poem.

With respect,



Know Thy Self

It's funny how your
 Own feelings color your reality
 Thoughts build up forms for expression
 When I feel sad I see things that I dislike.
 When I feel good I see things that I enjoy.
 But I know nothing can exist without perception
 Cause all things come from expression

African; Mexican

*We must stop fighting
 and killing each other.
 We cannot build nothing good
 From the blood of each other*

See

African; Mexican
 We must stop fighting and killing each other.
 We cannot build nothing good
 From the blood of each other
 We must seek to learn
 And understand each other
 We must start to focus on
 What we love about each other
 We are all brothers,
 Our roots drink from the same ocean
 We are one

Changed

No need to crowd around
 Because a few things have changed.
 I'm not your man or your friend,
 So it could never be the same.

 What about you baby? You thought I had forever.
 Picture you flipping — I thought it would be never.

 Then I came to realize
 What was really going on.
 I saw the outcome
 So I had to stay strong.

 Now everybody sees me on the streets
 So they want to speak,
 Knowing I'm straight from prison
 And just got released.

 I'm not trying to hear it,
 'Cause I see through all that games.
 Troy is my new name and I'm still the same,
 But my friends have been changed!

Writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, we bring you this first time writer who was introduced to us by the veteran Beat writer Joseph Martinez. To give you a little view of what he's about we're going to quote a portion of his letter in this introduction. "I hope that my works may help heal and remake your soul if needed. It is our goal here on earth to help all regardless of race, creed or sex. Until we learn this we will continue to feel pain and lose loves due to hate crimes (gangbanging), it must stop! I am twenty-four years old. I been there, done that! It is easy to see that the life we living isn't truly life but a self-created curse. Blind-Bliss. And there isn't nothing wrong with the world. It is something wrong with our minds. We must change the way we think and everything will fall in place. But first we must learn (study) the way we think. The thoughts that flows through our heads every second of the day." We appreciate what he's shared with us and hopefully this will be the start of a very fruitful relationship on both ends...

True Love

Before we can truly live
 We must first learn to see
 Life is a gift of love
 Pure love without greed.
 Because life gives us everything that's important for
 free!
 Air, water, light and sleep
 You just gotta learn how to see it
 Before you can live it, B.

Mind Madness

We all see and know
 The limits too; the mindset of hate
 We act out through fear of rejection
 We accomplish a state of transient respect amongst
 Our so call homeboys
 Nothing build off hate can last
 Because "hate" is a tool of death
 Our homeboys will only respect you for so-long
 Before "hate" creeps into their mind
 Then you become the hated and death is creeping
 Around your corner

TROY BULLOCK

Since this is a new writer, he introduces himself in his letter to us. "The reason for this letter is because I happened to run across the kind of work you company does and I'm feeling how you giving people in prison a way to get some of their talents out there in society to read. I'm not the best poem writer, but I love to write poems because I feel my work will touch people hearts, and show how I changed from a product of my environment to an adult. I haven't found a way to put my work out there, but I have a lot of people out in society trying to help me. But, until I do find a way, why not share some of my work to your readers." Well, you can definitely share as much as you would like and we'd like to welcome you to The Beat Within family. He's writing from the Attica Correctional Facility in Attica, New York... Thank you for sharing this poem, we're sure many of our readers will be able to relate...

*Now everybody sees me on the streets
 So they want to speak,
 Knowing I'm straight from prison
 And just got released.*

*Some of us make excuses
And find ways to explain why we live the way we do,
But nobody would ever tell you
What's real or what's really true.*

*The sad thing about this is that this cycle keeps going on
Without no intention of coming to a conclusion,
And the longer it goes the more young lives we end up losing.*

read the rest of Ramon Escobar's BWO piece on page 67

